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Resource Manual for the Delegate to the Salesian Cooperators



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ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE
Provincial Delegates

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Symbols used indicate origin of said document, in order of appearance:



The Salesians
of
Don Bosco



The Daughters
of Mary Help
of Christians



St. John
Bosco,
Founder



Timeline of
Cooperator
Association



The Association
of Salesian
Cooperators



The Holy See
Magisterial
Documents



The Holy Bible
The New
Testament

Introductory Letters

Rome, 24 April 2007

Excerpt from:
To the Delegates of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators

We would like to emphasize that this new Project [*Project of Apostolic Life* of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators] is a great occasion for re-launching the Association and at the time same, an invitation for all of you to join our lay brothers and sisters, and diocesan clergy, with a renewed commitment to the service of accompaniment. I remind you, too, that the new norms highlight the fact that the first responsibility for the Association has to be the Salesian Cooperators themselves. They will be the chief actors in a proper and effective animation that will help them to express their lay vocation to the full.

[We] ask the SDBs and FMAs to live out their charismatic dimension in mutual fashion through a style of animation that fosters autonomy in communion where the Association is concerned.

Every Salesian Community (SDB and FMA), provincial and local, is involved in the task, as set out by St. John Bosco from the beginning, of “supporting and giving increase to” the Association, by contributing to the formation of its members, and by making their Project of Life known.

The Association recognizes within its Councils the authority of the Religious members appointed by the Provincials. These, in cooperation with their Rectors and Superiors, will work to guarantee unity in communion and mission, in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

The Salesian Cooperators will bring Don Bosco’s presence alive among the young of the Third Millennium, by acting as true lay Salesians in the world, committed to guaranteeing, in close understanding with the Local Church and the consent of the Bishop of the diocese where required, the continuity of Salesian presence.

They work alongside us, in prayer and through a shared commitment in this mission which is a part of the mission of Christ and His Church, trusting in the loving concern with which Mary Help of Christians guides and sustains them.

For Delegates, the *Project of Apostolic Life* is an appeal to guarantee a service of apostolic and spiritual animation in view of an effective mission to families and young people by the members of the Association, by serving the Lord Jesus in them.

With the desire for an ever more profitable commitment to animation in the mission of our entire Salesian Family,

Don Pascual Chavez V., SDB
The Rector Major of the
Salesians of Don Bosco

Mother Antonia Colombo, FMA
The Superior General of the
Daughters of Mary Help of Christians



Dear Delegates,

With your provincial appointment as Delegate to the Salesian Cooperators, you have been invited to take part in probably one of the more ingenious aspects of Don Bosco's service to the young most at risk. Within Don Bosco's vast movement of people serving the young in the name of Christ, you have a very well defined and hopeful task: to serve as animator and formator of the Salesian Cooperator community.

When St. John Bosco met with Bartholomew Garelli on December 8, 1841, he took the first steps along the path to found and expand a world-wide movement to serve the poorest young people in the name of Jesus and his Church. Don Bosco began with simple catechism lesson for one boy in the sacristy of St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Before long, Don Bosco was gathering large numbers of young boys in an oratory-type setting where he could establish what would eventually be known as the oratory criteria (home, school, parish, playground).

While Don Bosco was the founder of this movement, he never worked alone. He always had others who worked with him as a team or educational community. Don Bosco never felt as if he "owned" the oratory or its service to the young. Rather, the movement he began belonged to Christ and His Church. It was a mission that had its roots in baptism and its call to holiness and service to God's kingdom.

Before long, Don Bosco was working with dozens of adult colleagues (lay people and clergy; single and married; young and older adults) in serving the young in the oratory. By the year 1859, there were three oratories with dozens of youth ministers each. With such a great number of volunteers came a variety of styles in youth ministry and religious piety. Many of his supporters were concerned for the future of the Oratory after Don Bosco.

In a moment of inspiration and genius, Don Bosco sought to give uniformity to his many youth services and to ensure its continuance by founding a pious society that would include both consecrated religious and lay people. These followers would carry on Don Bosco's service with the poor young people in the name of Jesus and within the mission of the Catholic Church.

One of these groups was for consecrated religious. Don Bosco began this group in 1859 when he invited some of his older boys to stay with him and animate (give unified form to) his works. That group of consecrated religious was approved by the Vatican as the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales in 1874. The other group of mostly lay people was in existence from the beginnings of the Oratory in 1841. However, its approval as an integral part of the congregation as "extern Salesians" was not accepted by the Vatican in 1864. Subsequently, in 1874, Don Bosco requested that this group be approved as the "Union of Salesian Cooperators." That petition was granted in 1876.

In this way, Don Bosco had founded a “Salesian Family” of consecrated religious and lay people who were totally dedicated to serving the young in the name of Jesus and the Church. While there were two branches to Don Bosco’s family, there was one movement to serve the young most in need. There was one educational philosophy (preventive system). There was one spirituality (find God in everyday life). There was one sense of community (family spirit). There was one educational objective (good citizens and faithful Christians). There was one pastoral approach (oratory criteria).

As delegates, you have the privilege of ministering to Don Bosco’s extern Salesians. Your service will consist in accompanying these followers of Don Bosco as a brother or sister in the family. You will serve as animator, teacher, spiritual guide, mentor, and friend. While the constitutions and regulations of the SDBs, FMAs, and Salesian Cooperators have changed many times, the essential nature of our identities and relationship has remained the same as in the period of 1841-1859 when Don Bosco shared his dream and his ministry with so many faithful colleagues. Your responsibility as Delegate to the Salesian Cooperators is to put your experience, faith, and pastoral commitment at the service of these Salesian Family members who are trying to grow into the fullness of discipleship with Christ in the spirit of Don Bosco. Undoubtedly, you will receive much from the Salesian Cooperators through your relationships and interactions with these “Salesians in the world.”

An excellent synonym for a Delegate to the Salesian Cooperators is “animator.” The word comes to us directly from two Latin words, intimately connected to each other, yet distinct in meaning: *anima* and *animus*. *Anima* is the soul, the life-giving force in the body; *animus*, the mind, the rational being. The former points in a vertical direction, and our being’s life-giving connection to our Maker, our “keeping our heart fixed in Heaven.” The latter points in a horizontal direction and the need to “keep our feet firmly planted on the ground.” Certainly, both Mother Mazzarello and Don Bosco could be said to have lived this unified dual nature to the full, making of it an efficacious power for good.

This is still our task today. Moreover, in a very special way as Delegates, as spiritual animators, to the Cooperators, we have the obligation to help these Lay Members of our Family to understand and put into action the life-long Call they have accepted: to live as Salesians in the world. Some know Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello and the Salesian Spirit very well from having grown up in our houses; others came to know us from living next store to us, hearing someone speak in church, surfing the net, or being invited by a friend, a Cooperator, to “come and see.” No matter where the individual Cooperator falls on that spectrum, we know from personal experience that there is always more to learn and experience about being Salesian. Helping them do so is our mission as Delegate.

It has been my experience that the Cooperators are hungering and thirsting for spiritual nourishment from us. They look to us to share with them our Family stories, to help them know Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, Alessandrina da Costa, Blessed Attilio Giordano and all our Salesian Saints and Blesseds much better. They are most grateful when we take the time to prepare prayer, a Good Night, or a formative talk for the

meetings; when we share the spiritual graces we have from living Religious life; and when we spend time listening, guiding, encouraging them to know and live the Salesian charism. They want guidance to know what it means to “be Salesian.”

They do not expect us to run meetings for them. In fact, it would be out of place for us to do so. The Cooperators are a Lay Association of the Faithful as defined by Canon Law, autonomous in their governance and yet in communion with us in spirit and mission and tied to us by spiritual bonds. The expertise and knowledge of the “outside” world they bring to us only increases our understanding of how to reach the young and the poor better today. We profit from each other’s areas of expertise as we seek to save souls together.

As you take up this ministry, it will be good to remember the words of Don Bosco, when he first proposed the idea of “extern Salesians” to his early followers. When they expressed skepticism, he declared that these Salesian Cooperators would be the bulwark of the entire movement that he had started for the education of the young most in need.

Welcome to this dynamic portion of Don Bosco’s movement for serving the young! Certainly, the Salesian Cooperators will be for us in these provinces the bulwark against any temptation to diminish the work of Don Bosco at a time when the life situation of the young leaves them far more vulnerable to harm and exploitation than ever before.

Fr. Thomas Dunne, SDB
SDB Provincial Delegate to the
Salesian Cooperator Provincial
Council of St. Philip the Apostle
Province

Sr. Denise Ann Sickinger, FMA
FMA Provincial Delegate to the
Salesian Cooperator Provincial
Council of St. Philip the Apostle
Province



Brief Historical Overview

The Association



adapted from: "The Origins" in *A Prophecy's Journey*
Author: Don Giuseppe Buccellato, SDB



Whatever person, even while living in the world, in his own home, in the heart of his own family, can belong to our Society (FROM THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES OF 1860).

Right from the very start of his work in favor of the Christian education of the young, Don Bosco knew how to create around himself a spiritual and apostolic movement which, to his mind, was already the *Society of St. Francis de Sales*, if only in a germinal way.

This reality, which acquired huge proportions in a very short time, involved the young, clerics, Priests, and laity in one single *spiritual movement*. It was a complex reality and seemingly undifferentiated, thus raising up perplexities in some external observers while being, in many ways, *prophetic*.

Twenty-two years after Don Bosco's having established himself at Valdocco, in a letter written in 1868 to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Religious, the then Archbishop of Torino, Alessandro Riccardi, expressed thus his perplexity concerning the work which certainly didn't follow the "canons" of other Religious Orders of the time. He writes:

It is impossible to understand just what a Congregation composed of so many disparate elements can hope to achieve, for they cannot possibly have the same goal. The school in Torino has been a place of chaos up until now - what with the artisans, students, laity, clerics, and Priests all mixed together. It will become even more so by expanding its sphere of action.

This unique mix of *laity* and *clergy* seems to represent, therefore, a characteristic element of its originality right from the very start of the Salesian work.

In Don Bosco's mind, the fecund presence of the laity and their involvement in the educational work in his Oratories began in 1841, even before settling at Valdocco (which would take place five years later). "We began gathering poor and abandoned boys in the city of Torino," he himself writes in a memoir from the 1870s, citing the events of 1841, the year of his Priestly ordination.



They were gathered in specific locales and churches, were entertained with pleasant and wholesome recreation, instructed, and guided to receive worthily the holy Sacraments of Confirmation, Confession, and Communion. To help with the many and varied tasks, a number of gentlemen united with us and, through their personal work and their charity, they supported our work, called 'the Festive Oratories'. These gentlemen were named

after the task that they were assigned to do, but, in general, they were called 'benefactors,' 'promoters,' and even 'Cooperators' of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. (*Biographical Memoirs*, vol. XI, 73)

Around 1858, the thought of giving continuity to his educative work matured in Don Bosco; probably in that year, he wrote the first draft of the *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*. He himself continues, in that memoir (p.74) already cited above:



From 1852 until 1858 various spiritual favors and graces were granted; but in that year the Congregation was divided into two categories, or, rather, into two families. Those who were at liberty to do so and felt they had the vocation, gathered together to live common life, residing in the building which has always been the Mother House, or the center, of our Pious Association - which the Holy Father advised us to call 'the Pious *Society of St. Francis de Sales*' and as it is still called today. The others, i.e., the externs, remain living in the world, at home in the bosom of their own families, while continuing to promote the work of the Oratories.

The first texts of the *Constitutions* are witnesses to this unity of spirit and of intent between laity and ecclesiastics, as we will see. The laity and the clergy, in Don Bosco's mind, are both part – juridically – of one *Society*.



- ◆ 1841 Don Bosco says that first "Hail Mary" with Bartholomew Garelli and the Salesian Society is "begun".
- ◆ 1846 Fr. Borel takes over direction of the Oratory in Don Bosco's sickness. Fr. Pacchiotti and other Priests help. Mamma Margaret moves into the Pinardi shed with him when he recovers in the Fall.
- ◆ 1849 Don Bosco gave hospitality to cleric Ascanio Savio when the archdiocesan seminary closed. He added 4 other candidates: Felix Reviglio, Joseph Buzzetti, James Bellia, and Charlie Gastini. Eminent and humble laymen also came to donate time and resources—Chevalier Marco Gonella, Count Carlo Cays, Marquis Domenico Fassati, and small businessman Giuseppe Gagliardi.
- ◆ Around 1850, **Don Bosco uses 'Congregation of St. Francis de Sales' to refer to him and his helpers.** Besides them, the 'Provisional Pious Union of St. Francis de Sales' is a group of lay people aiming to spread good books. Compare with original title of Salesian Bulletin in 1877.
- ◆ 1850 Don Bosco asked Pius IX for spiritual favors for a 'Congregation of St. Francis de Sales', meaning the staff of the several Oratories. This is the first time the name appears on a public document.

The Rule



adapted from: "An Idea's Journey" in *A Prophecy's Journey*
Author: Don Giuseppe Buccellato, SDB



In every age, the union of good people has been deemed necessary so as to help each other in doing good and in keeping far from evil (FROM THE RULE OF 1876).

Pius IX's *Brief* of May 9, 1876, would mark both the point of arrival and that of beginning anew in the history of the Salesian Cooperators; but by what paths and what intermediate stages did the awareness of giving life to a separate Association (which had been thought of as a living and active part of the *Society of St. Francis de Sales*) mature in Don Bosco?

Actually, we can state that the birth of the idea of an association of laity is antecedent in Don Bosco to the idea of founding a Religious Congregation.

The first plan, which the Chronicles record under the name of the "Provisory Pious Union of St. Francis de Sales", dates back, in fact, to 1850. The objective was that of "keeping impiety from progressing further." (*Biographical Memoirs*, vol. IV, p. 120) This concerned the abuse on the part of the press in religious matters. In fact, in 1848, Charles Albert, King of Sardegna, had issued an edict on "Religious Liberty," which was seen as a threat in many Catholic environments.

The tone of this *fundamental document* is rather bellicose; Don Bosco's name does not even appear, probably for reasons of prudence. The Salesian Fr. Morand Wirth does not hesitate in defining this "Pious Union," composed of seven men, "a type of Catholic masonry." The document wishes:

May the Provisory Pious Society be the start of a huge consortium, which, with the contribution of all its members and by all other licit, legal, and morally correct means which can be found and may it attend to all those works of moral, material, and instructional beneficence which shall be judged the most apt and expeditious in impeding impiety from making further progress and, if possible, in uprooting it from there where it has already planted itself.

In this "Provisory Pious Union", one of the first historians of the *Society*, Don Eugenio Ceria, foresees the *remote preparation* for the future *Union of Cooperators*.

From the "Pious Union" to the Chapter on the "Extern Members"

In the 1850s, the future Salesian Society began to take shape. In Don Bosco's mind, the origins of the *Society of St. Francis de Sales* are understood as a gradual evolution whose beginning coincides, practically, with some decisive events of his life and, in particular, as we know, with the catechesis begun in a place adjacent to the sacristy of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi which is connected to the Convitto Ecclesiastico in Torino.

When, around 1858, Don Bosco wrote in his first draft of the *Constitutions* that "the

purpose of this Congregation is to unite its members together – Priests, Clerics, and even laity – for the purpose of perfecting themselves by imitating, as much as possible, the virtues of our Divine Savior”, he did not make any effort to come up with some theoretical project, but limited himself to “painting a picture” of what already existed, of the reality which was already being lived for seventeen years - both inside and around him.

When Don Bosco, in 1860, prepared a draft of the *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* to submit to the Archbishop of Torino, Luigi Fransoni, a chapter of four articles was dedicated to the laity who were, in all effects, part of the Society even while living in their own home and not being tied by vows. The chapter on these "externs" would be enhanced four years later by a fifth article. This text would obtain a first seal of approval with the *Decretum Laudis*. On account of the great historical interest and importance, we place here these articles in their entirety, as written in the 1864 edition of the *Constitutions*:



1. Whatever person, even while living in the world, in his own home, in the heart of his own family, can belong to our Society.
2. He does not make any vow but will seek to put into practice that part of the *Rule* which is compatible with his age, state, and condition as is possible or to promote catechism for poor children, and see to the spread of good literature; and to work so that tridua, novenas, spiritual exercises and other such works of charity that will be especially directed to the spiritual good of the young and of common folk.
3. In order to participate in the spiritual benefits of the Society, it is necessary that he make at least a promise to the Rector to employ himself in those things which he will deem as giving greater glory to God.
4. Said promise, however, will not bind him under any pain of sin, not even venial.
5. Any member of the Society, who for a reasonable motive, should leave from it, shall be considered an “extern member” and can still participate in the spiritual benefits of the entire Society, provided he practice that part of the *Rule* prescribed for the externs.

The Oppositions of the Congregation for Religious

The text of the *Constitutions* which Don Bosco presented in Rome in 1864 would not be approved by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, one reason being precisely because of the presence of this chapter on "extern members."

In fact, in his report dated April 6, 1864, the Consultor of the Congregation would write the following in its regard: "I think it would be a good thing to strike all those articles... which present a novelty in the affiliation of 'external persons' to the Institute, and a true danger, given the times we live in and those places which are little secure." The observations of Pro-secretary Svegliati are along the same lines: "You cannot permit persons extraneous to the Pious Institute to be enrolled by affiliation."

Don Bosco defended himself. He tried to save "his" idea. In his response to the Consultors, he made reference to the history of other ancient Orders and to the *tertiaries* who would promote the life of their Institute in the world. "If this chapter cannot be annexed to the *Constitutions*," he stated, "may it at least be placed at the end and approved as an appendix to the corrected text of the *Constitutions*." He made some changes, returning, in substance, to the 1860 text and submitted it all again to the Roman authorities in 1873, placing the chapter on the *externs* in an appendix to the corrected text.

But it was useless. In order to obtain a definitive approval of the *Constitutions* in 1874, he had to resign himself to suppress the contested articles.

Here begins the road which will bring him, two years later, to the founding of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators which, because of all that has been said, was born precisely due to the *failure* of the Founder's original plan. The Church of Rome was not ready to understand or to approve that which today, in the light of the victories made by Vatican Council II, has become a true and recognized reality in the Statutes of some new Religious Institutes.

Laity and clergy together for the salvation of the young...

Towards a Definitive Plan for an Association of Lay Salesians

After the definitive suppression of the chapter on the "externs," Don Bosco compiled, date unknown, a text entitled *Associates of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales*. This text repeats, in substance, the contents of the suppressed chapter, notably developing them. For the first time one spoke of a Union, or distinct Association, even if it had strict ties to the *Society*. An excerpt from the original manuscript reveals to us the *purposes* of this first try at an Association:



1° To propose a means of perfection to all those who are reasonably impeded from entering into the cloister of some Religious Institute.

2° To participate in the works of piety and of Religion which the members of the Salesian Congregation accomplish in public and in private, in whatever way for the greater glory of God and the benefit of souls.

These two benefits can easily be obtained by observing the rules of this Congregation, in those parts which are compatible with each person's state in life.

3° Another motive, perhaps more essential than the others, is added here: the need to unite in doing good. It is a fact that secular individuals form associations for their temporal affairs; they get together to spread bad literature and, in order to spread evil maxims in the world, they form an association to propagate erroneous teachings and to put forth false principles to unwary youth. And they succeed marvelously! Shall the Catholics remain idle or separate from one another in such a way that their works be paralyzed by the bad? May it never be so! Let us all unite under the Rules of the Salesian Congregation; let us become one

heart and one soul with the “extern members” and be true brothers (confreres). Let the good of one be the good of all and the evil of one pushed away as evil to all.

To propose a way of perfection... to participate in works of piety... Let it not surprise us that the spiritual and ascetical purposes behind this first plan are the same as those clearly proposed to the entire *spiritual movement* which drew its origin from Don Bosco. We are speaking of building a *radical* Christian life and, in more immediate and explicit terms, of becoming saints by sharing *God’s concerns for His People*. These texts show us the heart and the mind of the Founder.



- ◆ *1859 Salesian religious foundation, the Salesian Society.*
- ◆ *1861 Fr. Ciattino, pastor of Mareto accepted on May 11 'as a tertiary' member. Rua's copy of the first Salesian catalog has him as 'extern member'.*
- ◆ *1862 Fr. Pestarino joins Salesian Society. He functions as an 'extern' at Mornese.*
- ◆ *1864 Decretum laudis for Salesian Society. But the Constitutions' chapter on the externs was rejected. In 1867, 1869, and 1873 Don Bosco tries to put that chapter of rules for externs in an appendix to the Constitutions.*
- ◆ *1874 Constitutions of Salesian Society approved, but without the externs. Don Bosco turns instead to the Cooperator project as a means to preserve the idea.*
- ◆ *1875-1888 Cooperators help to outfit missionary expeditions.*
- ◆ *1876 Pius IX approves Don Bosco's regulations for the 'Union of Salesian Cooperators', and suggests a single Union for men and women.*

The Organizational Structure



adapted from: "The Strengthening of the Association Through 1888" in *A Prophecy's Journey*

Author: Fr. Morand Wirth, SDB



The Salesian Cooperators ought not only gather alms for our hospices but must also avail themselves of every means possible so as to cooperate in the salvation of their brothers and, in a particular way, of the young (DON BOSCO, "Conference to the Cooperators at Lyons", 1882).

Immediately following its approval, Don Bosco got to work – speaking, traveling, and recruiting. He had foreseen that it would take two years to get the Association off the ground. His timeline would be respected.

The method varied, but the results were eloquent: often, when it was certain there would be no resistance, Don Bosco limited himself to sending the future Cooperator the *Rule* along with his certificate of membership. For persons of high rank, he added a personal letter. It was important to him to have "big names" who would give "luster" to his list of members, beginning with Pope Pius IX, who told Don Bosco that he not only wanted to be a Cooperator but he wanted to be the first of the Cooperators. With all simplicity he made the same proposal to Pope Leo XIII who declared that he wanted to be not only a Cooperator but a "worker." [A play on the Italian words "*cooperatore*" and "*operatore*"]

The Annual Conferences and the Salesian Bulletin

One means to preserve the unity in spirit and to increase the number of the Cooperators was the *Conferences* (a term which can be considered synonymous with "meeting"), which were normally held on the Feasts of St. Francis de Sales and of Mary Help of Christians. The very first of these was held in Rome on January 27, 1878. After reading a chapter on the love that our Patron Saint had for the poor, Don Bosco gave his talk on the works being carried out to help youth – "works which cannot but be respected, and even desired, by any government or political leaning whatsoever." (*Biographical Memoirs*, vol. XIII, p. 480) The meeting concluded with song and prayers. The *Biographical Memoirs* record for us the chronicles of about 50 such conferences held by Don Bosco in various cities in Italy and France, as well as in Barcelona in Spain.

Don Bosco also wanted to give the Cooperators an instrument of communication which would serve to keep them all united to the center of the Congregation and among themselves without forgetting its other purposes: publicity and fundraising. In January 1878, the *Catholic Book Lover* (*Il Bibliofilo Cattolico*), a periodical written, in the first place, to make the publications of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales known was changed into the *Salesian Bulletin*, a monthly publication, which was sent free of charge to Salesian Cooperators and to all who were interested in it, whether near or far. The distribution of this periodical increased from year to year, until finally reaching 40,000 subscriptions in 1887. A French edition appeared in 1879, an Argentinian one in 1880, and a Spanish one in 1886.

When a group of Cooperators was formed somewhere, "Decurions" were sought –

generally-speaking, a Diocesan Priest who undertook the care of ten or more Cooperators. A list of "general norms" was prepared for them to help them in their task. Coordination of the groups within a diocese took a Priest who was willing to accept the title of Diocesan Director. On the flip side, Don Bosco did not cease to encourage the Salesians, especially the Directors, to take care of the Association.

At Don Bosco's death in 1888, one thing is evident: the apostolic strength of the modest Salesian Congregation had been increased ten-fold thanks to the "fraternal" help of their Cooperators. Perhaps significant in this regard is the fact that at least once from Don Bosco's pen, the expression appeared as "*i Salesiani Cooperatori*". (*Memorie Biografiche*, vol. XI, pp. eighty-two and eighty-three) Many of these, indeed, could truly have been considered in fact, if not canonically, true "Salesians in the world". [the entire chapter 4, vol. XI, is on the Salesian Cooperators]



adapted from: "**The Salesian Cooperators from 1888 to 1965**" in *A Prophecy's Journey*

Author: **Fr. Morand Wirth, SDB**



The Work of the Cooperators and of the Pope have combined to shake many Christians from the languor in which they lie and to spread the energy of charity... a work which, in these days, appears exceptionally timely... it will spread to all lands, throughout all of Christendom. There will come a time in which the name "Cooperator" will be synonymous with "true Christian." The Hand of God upholds it. The Cooperators will be those who will help promote the Catholic spirit. (Biographical Memoirs, vol. XVIII, p. 125)

Organization and Expansion under Don Rua

At the beginning of Don Rua's Rectorate, and due to his personal interest, "A Theory and Practice Manual" appeared whose purpose was to furnish the local leaders of the Pious Union with a "Guide on How to Cooperate in Salesian Works". The first part specified the tasks of: the Decurions (the head of a local group); the Diocesan Director (a Priest, the "center" of the diocesan Salesian Movement); the Vice Director (in the larger, more important cities); the Salesian Committee; the Sub-Committee of the Salesian Cooperators; and the Promoters of the Association. Following this was advice on the manner in which to hold the Salesian Conferences. The second part of the little volume, entirely dedicated to zealous works, contains the following chapters: action and prayer; catechetical work ("every Cooperator should be a catechist"); vocations to the Priesthood (in families and in schools); the Press (to spread good literature among the people, in schools, in catechism classes, in Oratories, in offices, in hospitals,...); abandoned youth (to cooperate in the work for youth and to flank the Salesian works); and, finally, a great source of power (money) and the obligation to put it to good use.

In Italy, Don Rua succeeded in putting this plan into action. Every time that a group of Salesian Cooperators was established in a diocese (an important enough group), he asked the Bishop to name a Diocesan Director. This director, generally a parish Priest or a vicar general, was supposed to propose to the Superior his nominations for *Decurions*. In 1893, it was decided to gather them at Valsalice, around Don Bosco's tomb. It was an initiative that

held great promise since representatives from 27 dioceses of Italy responded to the invitation. It was a fruitful encounter, also, because, from this kind of "General Chapter of the Diocesan Directors of the Pious Union", as the minutes curiously called it, arose the idea of holding the first International Congress of Cooperators.

From that time forward, the Association made rapid progress and, at the gathering in Torino in 1898, forty dioceses were already represented. Being extremely close to the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Salesian Cooperators became most effective agents of Salesian expansion. They were often to be found involved in the beginning of new foundations, which they supported through material and personal contributions and spreading knowledge of the work of the Religious. During his travels, Don Rua showed, through his own personal example, what importance he attributed to the Salesian "cooperation".

Besides this, Don Rua was concerned with convincing his own Religious of their responsibility to the *Pious Union*. During the General Chapter of 1895, at his explicit requests, a special committee was formed to study the relationships between the Cooperators and the Salesian houses, and relationships with the individual houses and Torino. In the 1901 and 1904 chapters, he himself proposed: the nomination, in every Province, of a "Provincial Correspondent" who would concern himself with the Movement and "someone responsible for the Cooperators" in every House. The eleven articles which are found at the end of the Regulations of the Salesian Society and which bear the significant title of "Norms for the Salesians of Don Bosco Concerning the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators" come from deliberations made at this time, if only in substance and not in form. Also found here is another innovation of Don Rua's Rectorate: the creation of a Central Office for the Salesian Cooperators, composed of a president, (the Prefect General of the Society), of three Councilors (the chief editor of the *Salesian Bulletin*, someone in charge of publicity, and the Head of Correspondence), and of one or more secretaries. Don Rua also knew how to find the right man to make the various projects become a reality. In giving the responsibility for "publicity" to Don Stefano Trione and in naming him the first Secretary-General of the Union, a fecund and active period of "cooperation" began.



- ◆ *1877 Don Bosco plans for the First General Chapter (GC1) to consider Cooperators the 'soul of the Congregation'. Count Charles Cays invited by Don Bosco as a chapter member. At this time, the Count was a novice; he had been a Cooperator. Chapter deliberates rules for Salesians to help the Cooperators, opens membership to whole schools, to religious of other Orders, to Franciscan and Dominican Tertiaries.*
- ◆ *1877 Bro. Peter Barale's magazine (published since 1875) The Salesian Book Lover begins publication with name changed to The Salesian Book Lover or Salesian Bulletin, with the new purpose of uniting the Salesians with the Cooperators.*
- ◆ *1878 June Salesian Bulletin publishes first necrology of Cooperators, including Card. Berardi.*
- ◆ *1878 Newly elected Leo XIII wants to be not only Cooperator, but 'operator'. Cardinal Louis Oreglia, brother of the Jesuit and former Salesian brother Sir Frederick Oreglia, named Cardinal Protector of the Cooperators.*

- ◆ *1880 Conference by Don Bosco to Cooperators in Marseilles, France.*
- ◆ *1881 Sixth missionary expedition crosses on steamer Umberto I, owned by Cooperator Evasio Piaggio.*
- ◆ *1882 Cooperator Fr. Apollonio chosen Bishop of Treviso.*
- ◆ *1882 Don Bosco addresses Cooperator groups in France.*
- ◆ *1883 GC3 asks for clarifications on Cooperators. Don Bosco responds with draft rules for decurions*
- ◆ *1886 Don Bosco says "There will come a time when the name "Cooperator" will mean "true Christian"..." See Apostolicam Actuositatem, Vatican II decree on the lay apostolate, §33, the last sentence*
- ◆ *1886 Don Bosco addresses Cooperator groups in Spain.*
- ◆ *1886 GC4 discusses promotion of Cooperators by Salesian parish pastors.*
- ◆ *1886 Three Cardinals and 50 Italian bishops join.*
- ◆ *1893 A 'General Chapter of Diocesan Directors' of the Cooperators is celebrated at Valsalice. It begins planning the Bologna Congress.*
- ◆ *1893 Fr. Rua publishes Manual of Theory and Practice for Salesians to help the Cooperators.*
- ◆ *1895 First International Congress of Cooperators in Bologna.*
- ◆ *1900 Second International Congress in Buenos Aires.*
- ◆ *1903 Third International Congress in Turin. Official contacts with the Catholic Congresses movement.*
- ◆ *1904 GC10 codifies new set of regulations for Salesians to promote the Cooperators. Focus on duties of provincial and local delegates, and of each Salesian.*
- ◆ *1910 Congresses of Cooperators and Past Pupils in Turin. These were planned to coincide with Fr. Rua's priestly jubilee, but he died in April.*
- ◆ *1920 Congresses of Cooperators (Eighth) and Past Pupils in Turin; dedication of cast bronze monument to Don Bosco. These were planned for Don Bosco Centenary in 1915, but the war interfered.*
- ◆ *1925 Cooperators organize Congresses in various places to commemorate golden jubilee of Salesian missions, including Ninth International Congress at Buenos Aires.*
- ◆ *1947 GC16 thanks Cooperators for efforts in helping the increasingly sophisticated and expensive Salesian technical schools.*
- ◆ *1952 Pius XII's address to Convention (not Congress) of Cooperators in Rome places their apostolate in the orbit of the lay apostolate.*
- ◆ *1958 GC18 clearly distinguishes Cooperators from Benefactors.*
- ◆ *1964 Fr. Ricceri, Councilor for the Cooperators, interprets 'hour of the laity' as 'hour of the Cooperators'.*



adapted from: *Project of Apostolic Life: Official Commentary 2016*

Author: The Association of Salesian Cooperators (ASSCC)

In the post-conciliar period, all Catholic associations underwent a crisis – some more, some less profound – and made considerable efforts to reorganize and revitalize themselves for the purpose of putting into effect the directives of Vatican Council II and of responding better to the challenges placed before them by the rapid social and ecclesial changes. The Association of Salesian Cooperators also participated in an ample and serious way in the work of organizational renewal.

The World Council is a body that was initially established in 1974 (under Coordinator General Luigi Sarcheletti) as the "World Consulta" to the Rector Major, of which he availed himself for the animation of the Association when the new *Rule ad experimentum* was approved. It was composed of members by right and also members who were either appointed or elected. Its role was one of subsidiarity to the Rector Major for the World-Level governance and animation of the Association. When the seven-year term of the members of the second Consulta was completed (1981-87 Coordinator General Luigi Sarcheletti), a third was established (1987-94 Coordinator General Paolo Santoni) made up of World Councilors and some others who were given the task of preparing the Second World Congress and of seeing, via commissions, to the revision and updating of a new *Rule*.

Following the Fourth World Consulta (1994-2001 Coordinator General Roberto Lorenzini), and during the term of the fifth World Consulta, extended to an eleven-year term for the purpose of drawing up the new *Project of Apostolic Life* (2001-2012 General World Coordinator Rosario Maiorano), with the approval *ad experimentum* of the *Project of Apostolic Life* in 2007, the World Consulta took the name of World Council and, as such, became a collegial governing body, as did the Provincial and Local Councils.



- ◆ *1965 GC19 adopts Fr. Ricceri's draft document on Cooperators. The document places the movement clearly in the line of lay apostolate, recommends a youth section, and calls them the 'Third Salesian Family'.*
- ◆ *1965 Council document on laity ends saying the Lord sends the laity on the Church's mission, and 'they are to show themselves his cooperators' (Apostolicam Actuositatem 33).*
- ◆ *1966-1971 Between GC19 and SGC, Young Cooperators develop in Italy.*
- ◆ *1971 The 20th General Chapter, also called the Special General Chapter, commits Salesian Society to 'revitalization' of the Cooperators, in response to their message to Chapter. The same Chapter put out a renewed theology of the Salesian Family.*
- ◆ *1974 Renewed interim regulations.*
- ◆ *1986 Approval of Rule of Apostolic Life.*
- ◆ *2001: The World Consulta is entrusted with the task of animating the updating of the "RAL".*
- ◆ *2006: 3rd World Congress*
- ◆ *2007: The new Project of Apostolic Life (PAL) is promulgated ad experimentum. Characteristic of it is the charismatic identity in living the mission. (salesiani cooperatori*)*

Starting in 2012 (2012-2018 World Coordinator Noemi Bertola), the World Council is a body created to aid the Rector Major directly in the animation and governance of the Association and has a six-year term. Its task is two-fold: to animate the entire Association and to coordinate the formative and apostolic initiatives of the World Council, on which the SDB and FMA World Delegates take part by right.

For “animation” is intended an activity which makes one grow from within in one's sense of belonging and participation. In regard to the importance and the modalities of *coordination*, the indications of *Gaudium et Spes* are to be kept in mind:



There are also various Catholic associations on an international Level which can contribute in many ways to the building up of a peaceful and fraternal Community of nations. These should be strengthened by augmenting in them the number of well qualified collaborators, by increasing needed resources, and by advantageously fortifying the coordination of their energies. For today both effective action and the need for dialogue demand joint projects. Moreover, such associations contribute much to the development of a universal outlook—something certainly appropriate for Catholics. They also help to form an awareness of genuine universal solidarity and responsibility.



- ◆ *2012: 4th World Congress - Definitive Approval of the Statutes and Regulations of the Project of Apostolic Life (PVA)*
- ◆ *2013: The Holy See approves the Project of Apostolic Life (PVA). Its distinguishing characteristic: the witness of a life lived within the Church, the Salesian Family, and the world.*
- ◆ *2015: Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of Salesian Cooperators, Criteria for Animation and Governance, and the Official Commentary to the Project of Apostolic Life are published*
- ◆ *2016: Animating Economic Solidarity goes into its last draft*

The Association of the Salesian Cooperators Today*



How Many Salesian Cooperators Are There?

More than 30,000 in 11 Regions throughout the world:

EUROPE and THE MIDDLE EAST

Region: EASTERN CENTRAL EUROPE: 10 Provinces/9 Countries, Cooperators: 3857, Local Centers: 163 – *Bielorussia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine.*

Region: WESTERN CENTRAL EUROPE: 8 Provinces/7 Countries, Cooperators: 1225 Local Centers: 54 – *Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, and Ireland.*

Region: IBERIA: 7 Provinces/2 Countries, Cooperators: 2093, Local Centers: 120 – *Portugal and Spain.*

Region: ITALY, MIDDLE EAST, and MALTA: 15 Provinces/7 Countries, Cooperators: 8667, Local Centers: 268 – *Egypt, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Syria, and Turkey.*

THE AMERICAS

Region: AMERICA SOUTH CONE: 8 Provinces/4 Countries, Cooperators: 1547, Local Centers: 126 – *Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.*

Region: BRAZIL: 6 Provinces/1 Country, Cooperators: 1165, Local Centers: 74 – *Brazil.*

Region: INTERAMERICA: 9 Provinces/11 Countries, Cooperators: 1971, Local Centers: 143 – *The Antilles, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and the United States.*

Region: PACIFIC SOUTH CARIBBEAN: 6 Provinces/5 Countries, Cooperators: 1530, Local Centers: 136 – *Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela.*

AFRICA

Region: AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR: 11 Provinces/20 Countries, Cooperators: 936, Local Centers: 63 – *Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.*

ASIA and OCEANIA

Region: EAST ASIA and OCEANIA: 10 Provinces/13 Countries, Cooperators: 2310, Local Centers: 110 – *Australia, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.*

Region: SOUTH ASIA: 11 Provinces/2 Countries, Cooperators: 2817, Local Centers: 137 – *India and Sri Lanka.*

***Statistics from 2014/2015**

Signs of Life

- The renewal of the *Project of Apostolic Life* (PVA)
- The taking on of the vocational identity; greater autonomy and co-responsibility
- The formation of Provincial Delegates
- The appreciation for the contribution the FMA give to the life of the Association

Principal Challenges

- Growth in openness to and collaboration with the Cooperators in the educating communities
- Commitment to the evangelization of society in the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church
- Familiarity with and deepening the knowledge of the PVA on the part of the FMA and SDB Communities

Looking ahead

- Giving first place to caring for families in the apostolic outreach of the Cooperators
- Making known and promoting the lay vocation of the Salesian Cooperators within our educational communities and in our areas
- Giving visibility to the apostolic actions of the Salesian Cooperators at all levels: ecclesial, social, cultural...
- The option to request Consultative Status of ECOSOC, and, therefore, present in the UN as a Catholic and Salesian NGO in Geneva, so as to give our support as Salesian Family to certain topics which are inherent to education, justice, and Human Rights.

The Vocation and Mission of the Cooperator according to the new PVA

adapted from: *The Identity of the Salesian Cooperator 2014*

Author: Don Giuseppe Casti, SDB



Don Bosco consciously, purposely founds one single Family, the Salesian Family, so that his work will continue.

At the conclusion of one of his studies, Fr. Desramaut summarizes the “*identity of the Association*” in 1876 (in *Costruire insieme*, 1983, pp. 94-100) and concludes: “There was the fraternal association of three societies, two Religious, and one non-Religious, whose members:

- ◆ were strictly united to the Superior of the male Congregation, who was the center of the entire structural system,
- ◆ pursued the same moral (sanctification) and social (particular apostolic service) goals, and
- ◆ lived in common according to the values and to a program, in the degree in which the Statutes, Religious or not, permitted to each one” (p. 100).

Aware of being, by the dispositions of Divine Providence, the Father of a vast movement of united and joined spiritual-apostolic forces, Don Bosco lived his call profoundly. Although helped by his temperament and the socio-ecclesial mentality of his time, he also held the firm conviction that the charism which he was passing on to his sons was original. Thus writes Don Stella: “He appears dominated by the aspiration for unity, the “*vis unita fortior*” (a united force is stronger), in which we see reflected his rather firm idea about his religious patrimony: that of “*one single Family*” in the image and likeness of the human family which has God as its Father, and also that of the Church which has the Pope as its common Father” (*Don Bosco... I*, p. 225). In the next year he expressed his concept in a stupendous text for the first General Chapter in which he puts the three groups he founded on the same plain and in association with each other, using his typical stylistic form of a triple “*We have...*” (cited by P. Stella, I, p. 225, and by the *Acts of the General Chapter*, SDB, no. 153).

One can declare that for Don Bosco no one group was ever conceived or existed in isolation, outside of a unitary vision, stronger and richer than the distinction among the three groups required by Canon Law and by a legitimate process of personalization, but, unfortunately, exaggerated over the passage of time and history.

The fact that the first three groups - the Salesian Cooperators (SC – formerly CC), the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) – were the object of the direct charismatic founding action on the part of the Founder is to be considered fundamental. The first mode of existence for the Salesian Family was that of intimate communion among the SDB, FMA, and Cooperators, all “held in the reins” by Don Bosco himself. This is the first form, and probably the most typical and profound one. Precisely this historic fact makes us understand something further: the yet more special place held by the SDB. For them, Don Bosco was “Founder” in a totally special way: “*the sure*

and stable bond of union” (Reg. CC II). Logically, according to tradition, the Rector Major, inasmuch as he is Don Bosco’s successor, has taken this place of Father and Center of Unity for the entire Salesian Family. And, as Father of the Salesian Family, we listen to what he has to say to us today:



I make a pressing invitation to this Family to acquire a new mentality – to think of ourselves and to act always as one Movement, with an intense spirit of communion (unity of heart), with a firm will to act in synergy (unity of intent), with a mature capacity to network (unity of plans). In the *Regulations* of the Salesian Cooperators, Don Bosco wrote: “In every era, unity among good people was deemed necessary so they could help each other in doing good and in keeping far from evil... Weak forces, when united, become strong; if one little cord taken by itself is easily broken, it becomes rather difficult to break three united together. Weak forces, united, become strong: *‘Vis unita fortior, funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.’* We need never forget that we were founded by a Saint of social charity, Don Bosco (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 40), who was conscious of the fact, however, that educative pastoral work needs cooperative charity and that, to this end, the Holy Spirit raises up charisms” (Don Pascual Chavez, Strenna 2009).

The venture of God, Who inserts Himself into the vicissitudes lived by man through His Presence, His Word, and His Love – whether to one person or to a people – is a Mystery which surpasses us. The Church is thus the “Body of Christ” and the “Spouse of the Spirit”; an unusual reality, which cannot be comprehended or lived deeply except through the categories and capacities of intuition and of analysis proper and exclusive to faith. Vatican Council II pointed out that the Church is the bearer of a very high vocation and indispensable mission, defining Her more historically as the “People of God”.

This is a vision of the Church in which there is the fullness of co-responsibility and of equal dignity for all, without any individualism at any level, where it is “communitarily” faithful in one entity differentiated by multiple ministries and charisms.

Within the Church, all, both ordained and lay, are cooperators with God and each other.

Built on the foundation of the Apostles and with Mary, who is its image and prefiguration, the entire Church is a great Co-operator with the Father and with Christ in the work of the patient construction of their Kingdom. There is no true and complete cooperation with God outside of the Church: Don Bosco was also convinced of this. In the Church, all the members, without exception, are called to cooperate actively in the Divine task of salvation. Today, therefore, Christ, in the name of the Father, and Mary and the Church in the name of Christ, call to themselves and send to others every baptized person who is consciously aware of his faith.



To lazy, unengaged, sleeping Christians, the Master of the Vineyard says: “Wake up! Why are you here all day long doing nothing?” Their dramatic response: ‘Because no one has hired us!’ “Therefore, *go, you, too*, into my vineyard!” (Mt. 9:37). The Council has reaffirmed this with great clarity, and in a very impressive way, using the term “cooperation”. There are to be no parasites in the Church: everyone baptized is personally called to collaborate, as a good son, in the paternal undertaking of God, and precisely for this reason, everyone, whether ordained or lay, receives from the Holy Spirit – in *different capacities*, and with different gifts (“charisms”, I Cor. 7:7 and 12:7) – the possibility to give his contribution, little but indispensable.



The ordained ministers - Bishops, Priests, Deacons - are obviously eminent cooperators with God. The Council applies this title explicitly to missionaries because they cooperate “in the mystery of salvation” (*Ad Gentes, AG*, 15b and 25b). Priests, especially parish priests, are often defined as “prudent cooperators with the Episcopal order” (*Lumen Gentium, LG*, 28b and 41c).



The laity, in their turn, are all, *in full title*, co-responsible in the work of God. *Lumen Gentium* says: “Through their Baptism and Confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. ... every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself (*LG* 33b). *Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA)* says: “the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate... The laity derive the *right* and *duty* [emphases my own] to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head;... by the precept of charity, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, all the faithful are impelled to promote the glory of God through the coming of His kingdom (*AA* 2a; 3b). And they specify: “it remains for each one of them to cooperate in the external spread and the dynamic growth of the Kingdom of Christ in the world.” (*LG* 35d). “They are fellow workers for the truth... they cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction” (*AA* 6a and 10). And, magnificently: “they should be aware of the fact that they are cooperating with God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier (*AA* 16 a)... “co-workers [of Christ] in the various forms and modes of the one apostolate of the Church” (*AA* 33). Obviously, they also work with the Bishops, Diocesan and Religious Priests, among themselves, in their parishes, in the diocese, and beyond (cf. *LG* 27c). The *catechists* in the Missions are called “reliable coworkers of the priestly order” (*AG* 17b), “cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children” (*AA* 11 b), “witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church” (*LG* 41e).



Christian spouses and parents receive the sublime titles of “cooperators with the love of God” (*Gaudium et Spes, GS*, 50 b), “cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children” (*AA* 11b), “witnesses and cooperators in the fruitfulness of Holy Mother Church” (*LG* 41e).

All these things manifest the *mystical greatness, the ecclesial value, and the doctrinal and spiritual qualities of the name “Cooperator”*. What is it, then, to be a Salesian Cooperator? For a Christian, it is a *manner of expressing and making real one’s cooperation with the plan of God which is included, as a sine qua non, in one’s very vocation as a Christian*.



In the past few years, we have sought to give greater visibility and greater importance to the Salesian Cooperator vocation, valuing Don Bosco’s vision of the Cooperator’s being an “extern Salesian.” The desire to form the laity as cooperators in re-organizing Catholics for the Christianization of society was very strong in Don Bosco. He looked to them to support Salesian works, to volunteer as catechists, to collaborate with their Parish Priests, to help with Salesian assistance, at the Oratory, and in the schools.

In the June 1, 1885, conference given by Don Bosco to the Salesian Cooperators, he said:



To be a Salesian Cooperator means to work together with others **to support a work**, which has as its task to help the Holy Church in its most urgent needs and **to promote a work** which has been highly recommended by the Holy Father, so that **the young may be educated in virtue**, along the road to sanctity, because **its principal purpose is to instruct** the young, who have today become the target of bad people, **so as to foster** in the midst of the world, in high schools, in hospices, in festive oratories, in families... to promote, I say, **love for religion, good manners, prayer, the frequenting of the Sacraments, etc.**

The new *Project of Apostolic Life* delineates this renewed vision of the Salesian Cooperator in reference to his/her vocation, charismatic Salesian identity, mission, and the organization of the Association. Article 6 of the *Statutes* describes the identity of the Salesian Cooperator very well: “Salesian Cooperators **live out their faith in their own secular reality**. Taking inspiration from Don Bosco’s apostolic project, they have a strong sense of communion with the other members of the Salesian Family. They commit themselves to the same mission to youth and to ordinary folk in a fraternal and united way.”

The direct connection to Don Bosco’s vision is obvious in this article: for him, the Salesian Cooperator is a true Salesian in the world, a Christian – whether a layman or a secular Priest, who realizes his own vocation to sanctity without the ties of Religious Vows – who dedicates himself to the mission to the poorest and most disadvantaged youth according to Don Bosco’s spirit.

It is a call which is defined and characterized by:

- taking on a specific way of living the Gospel and **participating in the mission of the Church**. It is a free choice, defining one’s existence. (PVA, art. 2).
- working for the good of the Church and of society in a manner adapted to the educational needs of their territory and to their own concrete possibilities. (PVA, art. 6).

- bringing to the **Salesian Family those values which are specific to the secular state**, respecting the identity and autonomy proper to each group. It lives a particular relationship of communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales which, by the will of the Founder, has a specific role of responsibility within the Family. (PVA, art. 5).
- giving special attention to young people, especially to those who are poorest or victims of any kind: marginalization, exploitation, or violence; to those setting out in the world of work; and to those who show signs of a specific Vocation – all with an apostolic commitment that is educational. (PVA, art. 8)
- fostering and defending the value of the family —the foundational nucleus of society and of the Church— and are committed to construct it as “a domestic Church”. (PVA, art. 8)
- It is a vocation which responds to the most urgent needs **of the times** and which is carried out in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation, in structures where secular circumstances offer them greater possibilities of meaningful involvement: **civic, cultural, socio-economic, political, ecclesial, and Salesian**. (PVA, art. 12)
- At the 2012 Cooperator World Congress, Don Pascual Chavez, in the light of the PVA, and in a succinct and clear manner, described the Cooperator as someone characterized by 3 distinct traits:
- **A person rich in humanity**, which brings him to have a positive vision of himself, of reality, of the Church, and of the world because he has learned to see God in all things and to see these with God’s eyes.
- **A baptized person** with an immense love for the Church who, inserted into temporal realities with a clear Christian identity and practice, lives his state as a child of God and as a disciple of Jesus, with joy, gratitude, and responsibility.
- **A Salesian in the world**, according to Don Bosco’s original intention – as a passionate collaborator of God in the preferential choices of the Salesian mission: the family, the young, education, the Preventive System, and commitments in politics and in society.

The Apostolic Service of the Delegates According to the PVA

from: *The Official Commentary 2016*

Author: ASSCC



Statutes Art. 26

§1. Within the Association, the Delegates, of whatever Level, take part by right and with active voice on the respective Council, assure the “bond of secure and stable union” with the Salesian spirit, and share the charismatic and spiritual experience of the Founder.

In creative fidelity to Don Bosco, they are committed to offering their own specific contribution, even through participation in the collegial decision-making tasks of the Association.

§2. They motivate the Councils in their responsibilities and advocate for organizational autonomy in charismatic communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

§3. They offer the service of being a spiritual, educational, and pastoral guide to support a more efficacious apostolate of the Salesian Cooperators in their area.

CONSIDERATIONS

Core Themes

1. Who They Are
2. The Roles of the SDB and FMA Delegates
3. The Leadership at Various Levels

Keys to Understanding

A. The Delegates are members of the Salesian Congregation and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He or she is part of the Council in a responsible and collegial manner, with a specific task: the Salesian apostolic formation of the Salesian Cooperators. For this reason, according to the norms of Vatican Council II, the Delegate must: have formation to this task; be faithful to the doctrine and the spirit of the Church; be capable of nourishing the spiritual life of the laity and of their apostolic sense; be able to counsel the laity wisely, assisting them in their apostolic undertakings and fostering their initiatives; be capable of dialogue with them so as to render their mission efficacious; and be persons who esteem the apostolic works of the laity and promote them. It is particularly recommended that the Religious dedicate themselves with a willing spirit and that they promote the works of the laity according to the spirit and the rules proper to them.

B. The Delegates are called on to motivate vitality from within the Association. This happens by recalling the attention of the Salesian Cooperators [whether individuals in their Centers or on their Local or Provincial Councils] to:

- the nature and purpose of the Group inasmuch as it is an Ecclesial Group;
- the motivations to belong, the sharing of responsibility, and the specific tasks required by every role;

- the particular style of governance;
- Salesian authenticity;
- apostolic commitment and task; and
- living the spirituality of the *Da mihi animas; cetera tolle*.

It is a priority of the task of animation to help both the individual Cooperator and the group in this vocational growth. But, above all, the Delegates must be aware that their animating action seeks to make the Cooperators "grow" – above all the leaders – helping them discover their talents and putting them at others' disposal.

In addition to this, the Delegates are the bond of communion between the Religious Community and the Salesian Cooperators. Many difficulties between the Cooperators and the Religious are due to a lack of communication, with the consequent problem of reciprocal uneasiness. The Delegate facilitates the fraternal and apostolic relationships between the Community and the Association.

Co-responsible for Salesian apostolic formation.

The Delegate is defined as the **formator** in what regards Salesian and apostolic aspects. "Formator" is the term which is most apt to his functions. He or she is a spiritual guide, a prayer guide, and a guide as concerns the apostolate. He or she has to be an expert in the following things, caring for them in co-responsibility with the Council and with the Cooperator in charge of formation:

- the human formation of the Cooperator;
- their Christian and ecclesial formation; and
- their Salesian formation.

Don Bosco wanted the Association to distinguish itself for its operative charity – at the heart of which is the *Da mihi animas; cetera tolle* – in an untiring commitment to the salvation of the young and in the search for apostolic interiority. The presence of the Delegate must assure the Salesianity and the apostolic commitment of the individual Cooperator and of the Association. His or her task is not carried out only in the specific moments of formal formation (e.g., moments of spiritual direction and planned gatherings) but also in the fraternal atmosphere of trust and in the external conditions of prayer life and of communion.

It is the task of the World and Provincial Delegates – and of brother and sister Delegates – to accompany and animate the formative service of the other Delegates. The Delegates, as members of the Councils at the different Levels, participate in the decisions to be made and give their contribution along the process of discernment. The obligation to be present at Council meetings stems from this, without taking to themselves the presidency of the gatherings and meetings or those tasks which belong to the Coordinator and to the Council itself. Further, the Provincial and World Delegates visit the Cooperator Centers under their animation to care especially for their formative journey.



Regulations Art. 23

§1. The FMA and SDB Provincials, through the Delegates, animate the Centers established in connection with their works or linked to their Provinces.

§2. Every Local Council has an SDB or an FMA Delegate. Every Provincial Council and the World Council have an FMA and an SDB Delegate. They are the spiritual animators, and educative and pastoral guides, who are responsible, above all, for Salesian apostolic formation. According to the norms of the *Statutes*, article 18, they take part by right on the respective Councils.

§3. The Delegates to the Local and Provincial levels are named by each one's respective Provincial after having heard the thoughts of the members of the respective Council and keeping in mind, as much as is possible, the needs of the Centers.

§4. If the Local Center is not established in connection with a Salesian work of the SDB or the FMA, the Provincial can nominate a Salesian Cooperator as a Local Delegate, or another member of the Salesian Family who is adequately prepared.

§5. When necessary and opportune, a Delegate can fulfill this task for more than one Local Center.

§6. The Provincial Delegates animate the Delegates of the Local Centers to help foster the assumption of their responsibilities as regards their task of spiritual animation of the Salesian Cooperators and of co-responsibility in their Salesian apostolic formation.

§7. The Provincial Delegates, in understanding with the Regional and/or World Delegates, promote, if it is the case, updating and formation activities for all the Delegates of the Province on the Salesian charismatic dimension, with specific reference to their role of animation. These activities are open to the participation of the leadership of the Association.



The Role of the Provincial as Regards the Cooperator Association

- Collaborate in creating positive relationships and reciprocal trust among the FMA, the Cooperators, and the SDB.
- Animate the Province and Local Religious Communities to contribute, in various ways, to the formation of the Cooperators, so that they may promote and give witness to the Salesian charism, above all in lay environments.
- [The SDB and FMA Provincials, with the collaboration of the Animators and Directors,] guarantee unity in communion and in the mission. They commit themselves to promote the spiritual growth of the Centers and to involve the Religious Communities in witnessing to the values of sanctity and in the generous service of animation. (PVA, Reg. 9)
- Name the FMA Delegate to the Local and Provincial levels so that there is a bond of union among the FMA, SDB, and Cooperators.
- For these reasons, the Provincial must understand the description of the Delegate and realize the importance of the Delegate's presence on the respective Councils of the Cooperators

The naming of the Delegates is done:

Local Council:

An SDB Delegate or an FMA Delegate
named by the respective SDB Provincial or FMA Provincial (PVA, art. 36)

Provincial Council:

An SDB Delegate and an FMA Delegate
named by the respective SDB and FMA Provincials (PVA, art. 37)

Regional Consulta:

An SDB Regional Delegate named by the SDB Regional concerned and
An FMA Regional Delegate named by la Madre on the proposal of the Conference of
Provincials of the area concerned (PVA, Reg. 34)

World Council:

An SDB World Delegate, named by the Rector Major
An FMA World Delegate named by Rector Major, on the proposal of Mother General (PVA,
art. 38).



*The Lay Delegate and the Diocesan Priest Delegate:
a particular case*

from: The Official Commentary 2016

Author: ASSCC

When a Center is not established at an SDB or FMA work, the SDB Provincial may name a Cooperator who is adequately prepared to be the Delegate. Today Cooperators who are Delegates do exist. Those persons to whom one's thoughts go immediately, in consideration of the theological and pastoral preparation, are Diocesan Priest Cooperators or Permanent Deacon Cooperators. But this does not preclude that lay Cooperators who are well-prepared can also be named to this task. The requisite necessary for this type of Delegate is adequate preparation, particularly in Salesianity and in the apostolate. This naming is done by the SDB Provincial following the same *iter* required for SDB Delegates.

It is opportune that the appointment of the Cooperator Delegate be carried out with the knowledge of the Bishop, in consideration of the fact that the Center was established with his permission. Inasmuch as the Cooperator is a Delegate, he or she must be invited to participate in Province Delegate meetings. The Delegate who is not an SDB or an FMA carries out his or her role in the same way as the SDB and FMA Delegates, with the exception – if the Delegate is a lay person – of those priestly functions which are not proper to him or her. It is important that the lay Delegate take care to respect the role proper to the Coordinator and to the other members of the Council and that he or she should not take upon himself those responsibilities which belong to other persons' roles. The fact that he or she is a member of the laity and is also the Delegate does not place him or her in a position of superiority in respect to the other members of the Council.

The Delegate exercises his or her responsibility within the context of the structure and operations of the Salesian Cooperators on the Local and the Provincial Level, as spelled out in the Project of Apostolic Life:



PVA Regulations Art. 13

§1. The person who desires to enter into the Association matures his own choice freely and responsibly, by means of some fundamental steps: meeting with the group of Salesian Cooperators of a Local Center, sharing in their path of formation and participating in the initiatives promoted by it; sharing its spirit and mission, sustained by a progressive understanding, growth, and verification of his/her personal motivations.

§2. The person who desires to enter into the Association is welcomed by those in charge of the Local Center. He or She agrees with the one who is responsible for formation (the Delegate and/or the Formator) on a program adapted to his/her path of discernment and begins, as an Aspirant, this path of formation.

§3. After completing the process of formation in the Local Center, the Aspirant presents his/her written request to take part in the Association.

§4. The Local Council passes the request of the Aspirant on to the Provincial Council, accompanied by its own evaluation based on the Aspirant's knowledge of the charism of Don Bosco and of the contents of the PVA, the *Project of Apostolic Life*. The Provincial Council, on the basis of such evaluation, proceeds to the approval of the request.

§5. Entrance into the Association happens when the personal apostolic *Promise* is made. This apostolic *Promise* is a spiritual and ecclesial commitment which the Aspirant takes on through a free and knowledgeable choice. By means of it, he/she responds to the gift of the Lord and to his or her call to live this personal vocation according to the Salesian charism.

§6. The apostolic *Promise* is ordinarily made in the Local Center in the way indicated by the person himself and in keeping with the diverse contexts.

§7. In particular situations, where no juridically-established Local Center exists, one of the World Delegates will, in understanding with the Rector Major, give directions regarding the path of formation.

This directive is also valid for those persons who, because of logistical difficulties (of place or of time), are unable to be directed to a Local Center.

§8. The apostolic *Promise* may be received by the Rector Major, by the World Coordinator, by the Provincial Coordinator, by the Local Coordinator, or by someone delegated.



PVA Regulations Art. 18

§1. Ordinarily, Local Centers are comprised of a minimum number of six members who live and work in a determinate territory. They are organized at the Provincial level as soon as is possible, with a minimum number of three Centers.

§2. The establishment of a Center requires three steps: the consensus of the Provincial Council; the formal consent in writing by the Provincial concerned or by the diocesan Bishop by means of a juridical canonical act, if the Center should be outside of a Salesian work; the collegial act of the Provincial Council with the issuance of the "Establishment Decree" bearing the Provincial Coordinator's signature.

§3. In the event that there exists no possible reference to a Provincial Council for the establishment of a Local Center, recourse is made to the World Council with the prior consent of the SDB or FMA Provincial. This is so, in particular, in the following cases: when there is a lack of the minimum number of Centers; or in the formation of a group of persons interested in the Salesian charism and in the Association who frequent either a Salesian work or territory.

§4. Local Centers can organize themselves into groups of common interest and of specific commitment. Said groups are always followed and animated by the Local Council.

It is advisable that one member of such groups be part of the Council. Alternatively, it is hoped that a member of the Local Council will be in dialogue with the particular interest group so as to maintain the link with the Center.

§5. Members who live in a territory where no Local Center exists always remain linked with the one that is closest, which maintains contact with them and encourages their participation in its activities.

§6. The Association is open to the possibility of creating Centers of Salesian Cooperators wherever the Salesian mission calls for it.

§7. Those members who are involved in an apostolic and educational Salesian reality can open the way for the creation of a Salesian Cooperator Center which remains linked to that work.

Such Centers will commit themselves to propose a way for the laity involved in that Salesian work to draw near to the Association.

§8. Salesian Cooperators who, on account of a transfer, do not have the possibility of integration in the life of a Local Center can remain linked to the Local Center of origin if there is no other solution. The Local Council of said Center takes on the responsibility of maintaining contact with them, even through the modern technologies of communication.

§9. The SDB Provincial is recognized, both at the Provincial level and in the territory of reference, as the one who represents the Rector Major in the services of animation, of charismatic guide, and of the promotion of the Salesian Family.

§10. In Centers established in connection with FMA Communities, the Rector Major, with the consent of Mother General, delegates the service of animation, of charismatic guide, and of the promotion of the Association of Salesian Cooperators to the FMA Provincial concerned.

§11. Whenever the decision is made to suppress a Salesian work (SDB or FMA) to which a Local Center of the Association was connected, the Local Center will commit itself to guarantee the continuity of the Salesian presence in the territory, working in strict understanding with the Local Church.

The Provincials will agree with those in charge of the Local Center on solutions to eventual logistical and organizational problems consequent to the suppression of the work. Moreover, they will commit themselves, as much as possible, to assure its necessary spiritual animation

through the confirmation of a Delegate, and, eventually, through the canonical establishment of a new Center.

§12. When Local Centers are established in connection with neighboring SDB and FMA works, it is opportune that relationships of communion and of collaboration be established proper to those who recognize that they have the same mission and the same spirit in common, while respecting the autonomy of each Center.



PVA Regulations Art. 21

§1. In order to assure the functioning of the Association as regards its apostolic and missionary purposes, the tasks of the Local Council are to:

- plan, promote, and coordinate the formative and apostolic initiatives of its members;
- take care of the bonds of union and of communion with the Provincial Council or the World Council of the Association where no Provincial Council exists;
- strengthen the charismatic ties and bonds of communion with the Salesian Congregation, with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and with the other Groups of the Salesian Family;
- decide on the convocation of Assemblies;
- see to the administration of the goods of the Association;
- approve the Budget and the Balance to present to the members;
- accompany the Aspirants in their participation in the Center and give them a quality formation, taking into account the formation guidelines of the Association adopted by the Provincial Council;
- make use of the professional competencies and the spiritual riches of all the members for the good of the Association, valuing their differences and directing them constructively towards the gift of unity;
- animate initiatives which foster the vocational fidelity of the members and their active participation in the life of the Center, taking into account the various groups which compose it, and favoring differentiated paths;
- make known and spread Don Bosco's spirituality (for example, by means of the Mamma Margaret workshops, the "Bosco Homes", and other similar initiatives);
- propose the Vocation of the Salesian Cooperator, planning possible initiatives to welcome Aspirants;
- adopt other initiatives to foster an optimal functioning of the Center, respecting the directives of the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

§2. Every Local Council elects from among its lay members:

- a Coordinator
- a Treasurer
- a Secretary.

Every Council, moreover, designates from among its members someone to be in charge of Formation, who coordinates with the Delegate, as a guarantor of the charism. In the case that

the designation of such a person is lacking, the Coordinator, in dialogue with the Delegate, can identify a Salesian Cooperator who is not part of the Center to carry out this service.



PVA Regulations Art. 24

§1. The Local Centers of a determinate territory – established by the Rector Major with the World Council – constitute a Province.

§2. At the Provincial level, the Association is directed in a collegial manner by a Provincial Council.

§3. The Provincial Council consists of members elected by the Councilors of the Local Centers during the Provincial Congress. It is composed of a convenient number of Councilors, from four to twelve, and of the Provincial SDB Delegate and the Provincial FMA Delegate who have an active voice; i.e., with the right to vote.



PVA Regulations Art. 25

In order to assure the functioning of the Association as regards their apostolic purposes, in communion with the World Council, the tasks of the Provincial Council are to:

§1.

- promote the Association's guidelines and coordinate formative and apostolic initiatives;
- support the Local Centers, valuing the commitment of their Councils;
- establish with the Local Councils two formative encounters during the year, according to the guidelines of the Association;
- hold at least two formative initiatives during the year, where it is possible;

§2.

- grant approval for entrance into the Association, on the proposal of the Local Council;
- carry out the collegial act of a dismissal;

§3.

- foster the bonds of union and of communion with the Local Councils and the World Council;
- strengthen the charismatic ties with the Society of St. Francis de Sales, with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and with the other Groups of the Salesian Family;
- give their opinion on the naming of their own Provincial Delegates;

§4.

- promote the renewal of the *Promise* as a moment of celebration which gives quality to their path of fidelity;
- promote the spiritual exercises, that strong moment of spirituality in which the vocational fidelity of the members is renewed with the *Promise*;

- take care of and animate the initiatives which foster the vocational fidelity of the members and an active participation in the life of the Association;

§5.

- receive and examine the “Statement of Cash Flow” of the economic management of the Local Centers;
- approve their Budget and send it to the Local Councils;
- approve the “Statement of Cash Flow” of its own economic management and send it to the World Council;
- convoke and organize the Provincial Congress;
- foster the participation of the Local Centers in the initiatives of the Regional Consulta;
- see to the administration of the goods of the Association in the Province.

Important Information Regarding the Establishment of New Cooperator Centers



PVA Regulations Art. 18

§1. Ordinarily, Local Centers are comprised of a minimum number of six members who live and work in a determinate territory. They are organized at the Provincial level as soon as is possible, with a minimum number of three Centers.

§2. The establishment of a Center requires three steps: the consensus of the Provincial Council; the formal consent in writing by the Provincial concerned or by the diocesan Bishop by means of a juridical canonical act, if the Center should be outside of a Salesian work; the collegial act of the Provincial Council with the issuance of the “Decree of Establishment” bearing the Provincial Coordinator’s signature.

§3. In the event that there exists no possible reference to a Provincial Council for the establishment of a Local Center, recourse is made to the World Council with the prior consent of the SDB or FMA Provincial. This is so, in particular, in the following cases: when there is a lack of the minimum number of Centers; or in the formation of a group of persons interested in the Salesian charism and in the Association who frequent either a Salesian work or territory.

§4. Local Centers can organize themselves into groups of common interest and of specific commitment. Said groups are always followed and animated by the Local Council. It is advisable that one member of such groups be part of the Council. Alternatively, it is hoped that a member of the Local Council will be in dialogue with the particular interest group so as to maintain the link with the Center.

§5. Members who live in a territory where no Local Center exists always remain linked with the one that is closest, which maintains contact with them and encourages their participation in its activities.

§6. The Association is open to the possibility of creating Centers of Salesian Cooperators wherever the Salesian mission calls for it.

§7. Those members who are involved in an apostolic and educational Salesian reality can open the way for the creation of a Salesian Cooperator Center which remains linked to that work.

Every Salesian Community (SDB and FMA), at both the Provincial and Local levels, must feel itself involved, as Don Bosco wished, in the task of “supporting and increasing” the Association, of contributing to the formation of its members, and of making known and promoting their Project of Apostolic Life. (PVA, Statutes Art. 25)

Networking with the Salesian Family



In fidelity to Don Bosco's vision that "weak forces, when united, become strong, and if one cord taken by itself is easily broken, it is rather difficult to break three united," Salesian Cooperators care for the communion and the collaboration with the other Groups of the Salesian Family. They do this by means of reciprocal knowledge and information, reciprocal spiritual and formative help, and involvement in common apostolic tasks, with respect for the identity and autonomy of each Group. (PVA, art. 23).



Regulations Art. 30

§1. The Rector Major makes Don Bosco, his mission, and his spirit present today. In him is recognized the service of unity as Don Bosco's Successor and as our common Father, the Center of unity of the entire Salesian Family.

Within the Association, to him falls the charismatic task of offering guidelines necessary to guarantee the fecundity of the charism, the development of the Association, and the maturation of formative and apostolic initiatives.

§2. In the exercise of his ministry, carried out personally or through his Vicar or another representative chosen by him, the Rector Major ordinarily avails himself of the Salesian Cooperator World Council, above all, for the animation of the entire Association and for the coordination of the formative and apostolic initiatives.



Regulations Art. 9

§1. Relations with the SDB confreres and the FMA Sisters develop in a climate of reciprocal trust. The animation of the Centers which are established at Salesian works involves the Delegates, in particular, their respective Provincial, and the Local Religious Community. These have the task of contributing in various ways to the formation of the members so that they might promote and give witness to the Salesian charism, above all in the lay environment.

§2. The SDB and FMA Provincials, with the collaboration of the Animators and Directors, guarantee unity in communion and in the mission. They commit themselves to promote the spiritual growth of the Centers and to involve the Religious Communities in witnessing to the values of sanctity and in the generous service of animation.



Statutes Art. 23

§1. In fidelity to Don Bosco's vision that "weak forces, when united, become strong, and if one cord taken by itself is easily broken, it is rather difficult to break three united,"³⁷ Salesian Cooperators care for the communion and the collaboration with the other Groups of the Salesian Family. They do this by means of reciprocal knowledge and information, reciprocal spiritual and formative help, and involvement in common apostolic

tasks, with respect for the identity and autonomy of each Group.

§2. Participation on the Salesian Family Consulta/Commission at the different levels and the link with the pastoral structures of the Church and civic institutions foster the common search for new initiatives. The Salesian mission promotes and gives witness to the rich spiritual and apostolic inheritance it has received.

§3. Salesian Cooperators feel close to all the Groups belonging to the Salesian Family because they are all heirs of the Salesian charism and spirit.

They are open to and foster every form of collaboration, especially with lay groups, respecting the identity and autonomy of each one.

“Agreed Policy of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the Animation of the Cooperators”

– footnoted above in Article 9

[N.B. – This original agreement between the SDB and FMA is based upon the former *Rule of Apostolic Life* for the Salesian Cooperator and all the references herein refer to it. This Rule and this Agreements have now been superseded as all of the following is incorporated directly into the text of the present 2013 *Project of Apostolic Life* (PVA). The Agreement itself, however, remains integral to understanding the development of the role, relationship, and responsibility of the SDB and FMA Delegates – Provincial and Local – to the Salesian Cooperators. Articles pertinent to the Delegates are printed here.]

Art. 1

1. Without prejudice to their own Constitutions and Regulations, the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, aware of their responsibilities, commit themselves to observe the Regulations of Apostolic Life of the Association of Salesian Cooperators in accordance with their respective competence and within the limits indicated by the Regulations themselves.

2. In this commitment they will make special reference to local and provincial councils of the Cooperators who have to govern the Association at those levels in collegial fashion (RAL 43,1). And since the various local Centres of the Association are organised according to a provincial plan "based on the structure of the Salesian province" (RAL 42,1), the SDB Provincial is recognized as the one who makes present the ministry of the Rector Major in services of "animation", guidance and promotion (RAL 23,3, and 42,2).

Art. 2

The fusion of a local Centre attached to a work of the FMA with a local Centre attached to an SDB work or vice versa, requires the consent of the competent SDB and FMA Provincials, and will take place by a collegial act of the Provincial Council, after hearing the views of the respective local Councils, by a decree of the Coordinator of the same Provincial Council. The new Centre succeeds the two previous Centres as regards economic assets and liabilities, unless a different arrangement is made in the decree of fusion.

Art. 9

SDB and FMA Provincials, in the area of their respective competence, must appoint without undue delay the SDB and FMA Delegates for each local Centre or provincial grouping of Centres, in accordance with RAL 46,2.

Art. 10

If within the confines of an FMA Province there is more than one Provincial Council in operation, the FMA Provincial Delegate is by right a member of each of them. The FMA Provincial Delegate is also competent to visit the Centres erected in association with FMA works.

Art. 11

1. The SDB Provincial Delegate carries out his duties of spiritual animation and Salesian apostolic formation in respect of all the Centres of the provincial grouping for which he has been appointed; for this purpose it is highly desirable that he be a Salesian priest.
2. In the performance of his task, he will work in common agreement with the FMA Provincial Delegate so as to ensure fruitful apostolic results and in view of combined pastoral activity.
3. In agreement with the competent FMA Provincial and with the FMA Provincial Delegate, he will visit the Centres erected in association with FMA works, also for the purpose of preserving and developing the relationships (RAL 24,2.) which bind the Cooperators to the Salesian Congregation.

Art. 12

Relationships of collaboration and shared responsibility between the Salesian Congregation and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as regards the Association of Salesian Cooperators at international level shall be studied periodically and by common accord by the Councillor General for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication (cf. SDB Const. 137) and by the FMA Vicar General (cf. FMA Const. 126). For this purpose, both may avail of the collaboration of specialists.

Rome, 16 August 1986

Fr. Egidio Viganò

Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco



M. Marinella Castagno

Superior General of the Daughters of MHC



Associations of the Faithful

Code of Canon Law (Codex Iuris Canonici)



BOOK II. THE PEOPLE OF GOD

LIBER II. DE POPULO DEI

TITLE V. ASSOCIATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL (Cann. 298 - 329)

CHAPTER I. COMMON NORMS

Can. 298

§1. In the Church there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life; in these associations the Christian faithful, whether clerics, lay persons, or clerics and lay persons together, strive in a common endeavor to foster a more perfect life, to promote public worship or Christian doctrine, or to exercise other works of the apostolate such as initiatives of evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with a Christian spirit.

§2. The Christian faithful are to join especially those associations which competent ecclesiastical authority has erected, praised, or commended.

Can. 300 No association is to assume the name Catholic without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority according to the norm of can. 312.

Can. 301

§3. Associations of the Christian faithful which are erected by competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations.

Can. 303 Associations whose members share in the spirit of some religious institute while in secular life, lead an apostolic life, and strive for Christian perfection under the higher direction of the same institute are called third orders or some other appropriate name.

Can. 304

§1. All public or private associations of the Christian faithful, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes which define the purpose or social objective of the association, its seat, government, and conditions required for membership and which determine the manner of its acting, attentive, however, to the necessity or advantage of time and place.

§2. They are to choose a title or name for themselves adapted to the usage of time and place, selected above all with regard to their intended purpose.

Can. 305

§1. All associations of the Christian faithful are subject to the vigilance of competent ecclesiastical authority which is to take care that the integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them and is to watch so that abuse does not creep into ecclesiastical discipline. This authority therefore has the duty and right to inspect them according to the norm of law and the statutes. These associations are also subject to the governance of this same authority according to the prescripts of the canons which follow.

§2. Associations of any kind are subject to the vigilance of the Holy See; diocesan associations and other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese are subject to the vigilance of the local ordinary.

Can. 306 In order for a person to possess the rights and privileges of an association and the indulgences and other spiritual favors granted to the same association, it is necessary and sufficient that the person has been validly received into it and has not been legitimately dismissed from it according to the prescripts of law and the proper statutes of the association.

Can. 307

§1. The reception of members is to be done according to the norm of law and the statutes of each association.

§2. The same person can be enrolled in several associations.

§3. Members of religious institutes can join associations according to the norm of their proper law with the consent of their superior.

Can. 308 No one legitimately enrolled is to be dismissed from an association except for a just cause according to the norm of law and the statutes.

Can. 309 According to the norm of law and the statutes, legitimately established associations have the right to issue particular norms respecting the association itself, to hold meetings, and to designate moderators, officials, other officers, and administrators of goods.

Can. 311 Members of institutes of consecrated life who preside offer [*sic*] or assist associations in some way united to their institute are to take care that these associations give assistance to the works of the apostolate which already exist in a diocese, especially cooperating, under the direction of the local ordinary, with associations which are ordered to the exercise of the apostolate in the diocese.

CHAPTER II. PUBLIC ASSOCIATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL

Can. 312

§1. The authority competent to erect public associations is:

1/ the Holy See for universal and international associations;

2/ the conference of bishops in its own territory for national associations, that is, those which from their founding are directed toward activity throughout the whole nation;

3/ the diocesan bishop in his own territory, but not a diocesan administrator, for diocesan associations, except, however, for those associations whose right of erection has been reserved to others by apostolic privilege.

§2. Written consent of the diocesan bishop is required for the valid erection of an association or section of an association in a diocese even if it is done by virtue of apostolic privilege. Nevertheless, the consent given by a diocesan bishop for the erection of a house of a religious institute is also valid for the erection in the same house or church attached to it of an association which is proper to that institute.

Can. 313 Through the same decree by which the competent ecclesiastical authority according to the norm of can. 312 erects it, a public association and even a confederation of public associations is constituted a juridic person and, to the extent it is required, receives a mission for the purposes which it proposes to pursue in the name of the Church.

Can. 314 The statutes of each public association and their revision or change need the approval of the ecclesiastical authority competent to erect the association according to the norm of can. 312, §1.

Can. 315 Public associations are able on their own initiative to undertake endeavors in keeping with their own character. These endeavors are governed according to the norm of the statutes, though under the higher direction of the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312, §1.

Can. 316

§1. A person who has publicly rejected the Catholic faith, has defected from ecclesiastical communion, or has been punished by an imposed or declared excommunication cannot be received validly into public associations.

§2. Those enrolled legitimately who fall into the situation mentioned in §1, after being warned, are to be dismissed from the association, with due regard for its statutes and without prejudice to the right of recourse to the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312, §1.

Can. 317

§1. Unless the statutes provide otherwise, it is for the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312, §1 to confirm the moderator of a public association elected by the public association itself, install the one presented, or appoint the moderator in his own right. The same ecclesiastical authority also appoints the chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant, after having heard the major officials of the association, when it is expedient.

§2. The norm stated in §1 is also valid for associations which members of religious institutes erect outside their own churches or houses in virtue of apostolic privilege. In associations which members of religious institutes erect in their own church or house, however, the nomination or confirmation of the moderator and chaplain pertains to the superior of the institute, according to the norm of the statutes.

§3. In associations which are not clerical, lay persons are able to exercise the function of moderator. A chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant is not to assume that function unless the statutes provide otherwise.

§4. Those who exercise leadership in political parties are not to be moderators in public associations of the Christian faithful which are ordered directly to the exercise of the apostolate.

Can. 318

§1. In special circumstances and where grave reasons require it, the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in Can. 312, §1 can designate a trustee who is to direct the association for a time in its name.

§2. The person who appointed or confirmed the moderator of a public association can remove the moderator for a just cause, after the person has heard, however, the moderator and the major officials of the association according to the norm of the statutes. The person who appointed a chaplain can remove him according to the norm of cann. 192-195.

Can. 319

§1. Unless other provision has been made, a legitimately erected public association administers the goods which it possesses according to the norm of the statutes under the higher direction of the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in can. 312, §1, to which it must render an account of administration each year.

§2. It must also render to the same authority a faithful account of the expenditure of the offerings and alms which it has collected.

Can. 320

§1. Only the Holy See can suppress associations it has erected.

§2. For grave causes, a conference of bishops can suppress associations it has erected. A diocesan bishop can suppress associations he has erected and also associations which members of religious institutes have erected through apostolic indult with the consent of the diocesan bishop.

§3. The competent authority is not to suppress a public association unless the authority has heard its moderator and other major officials.

CHAPTER IV. SPECIAL NORMS FOR ASSOCIATIONS OF THE LAITY

Can. 327 Lay members of the Christian faithful are to hold in esteem associations established for the spiritual purposes mentioned in can. 298, especially those which propose to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit and in this way greatly foster an intimate union between faith and life.

Can. 328 Those who preside over associations of the laity, even those which have been erected by virtue of apostolic privilege, are to take care that their associations cooperate with other associations of the Christian faithful where it is expedient and willingly assist various Christian works, especially those in the same territory.

Can. 329 Moderators of associations of the laity are to take care that the members of the association are duly formed to exercise the apostolate proper to the laity.

Sacred Scripture provides a foundation for the natural right to associate:



Then God said: “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.” God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth” (Gen. 1:26-28).

Recognizing the Divine Law, the Church identifies associations of the faithful as an important element of her life and structure. These associations are identified in Canon Law in the following manner: In the Church there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, in which the Christian faithful, either clergy or laity or clergy and laity together, strive by common effort to promote a more perfect life or to foster public worship or Christian doctrine or to exercise other apostolic works, namely to engage in efforts of evangelization, to exercise works of piety or charity and to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.

(Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition, Canon Law Society of America, 1983, Canon 298§1. The norms concerning associations of the faithful for the Eastern Churches reflect the hierarchical structure of the East. The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and particular law of each Church *sui iuris* should be consulted.)

God created man a social being. “This social life is not something added onto man...Through his dealings with others, through his reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny.” (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World [Gaudium et Spes (GS)], no. 25) Whether we believe in God or not, whether we like it or not, our very nature demands interdependence.

Because we are social creatures, Jesus established His Church as a society governed by the Pope and the Bishops in union with him. Canon 215 acknowledges our natural right to form associations “for charitable and religious purposes or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world.” This same canon acknowledges the right to freely hold meetings to pursue the purposes of the association. In recognition of our social nature, our Church established laws to govern groups associating together under a common purpose.

Given the comprehensive nature of the subject, it is impossible to provide a thorough review of all the canons pertaining to associations of the faithful. In an attempt to promote the healthy development of associations among the Christian faithful, I offer the basic canonical norms governing associations of the faithful. First, I will begin with a working definition. Following this, I will address the role of ecclesiastical authority over associations, the various types of associations of the faithful, their juridic status and the use of the term “Catholic.” In summary, I will apply these concepts to a paradigm of education.

Associations of the Faithful: A Working Definition

An aggregate of persons, with a common purpose congruent with the mission of the Church, who freely associate in such a manner that rights are exercised and obligations acquired without change to the status of each individual person who form the association.

An association of the faithful is an aggregate of persons, not of things. Christ's faithful possess the natural right and have the liberty "to found and to govern associations for charitable and religious purposes or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world; they are free to hold meetings to pursue these purposes in common" (Canon 215). While the association may acquire property and enter into contracts in the pursuit of its purpose and fulfillment of apostolate, the association exists because of the people, not the goods it acquires.

By the very nature of an association, the members pursue a common purpose. In secular society, many associations exist which purpose may or may not have Christian orientation. In contrast, associations of the faithful, by nature, maintain a purpose congruent with the mission of the Church.

Ecclesiastical Authority and Associations of the Faithful

Because associations of the faithful must have a common purpose congruent with the mission of the Church, competent ecclesiastical authority has the obligation of vigilance over all in matters of faith, morals and ecclesiastical discipline. The purpose of this vigilance is to promote the common good, protect against the infringement of rights and duties and provide a venue of vindication when necessary (cf. Canon 223). This vigilance allows competent authority to visit the associations in accord with the norms of law and the statutes of the association (Canon 305§1). Regarding public associations, the authority that erected it has direct supervision over the association. Regarding private associations, ecclesiastical authority must respect their autonomy but has the obligation to "take care that their energies are not dissipated and that the exercise of their apostolate is ordered toward the common good (Canon 323§2)." He also has the right "to be watchful that the goods are used for the purposes of the association (Canon 325§1)."

Types of Associations

Two broad categories of associations exist within the Church: public and private. Further distinctions made in law are beyond the parameters of this article [cf. Clerical associations (Canons 302) and third orders (Canon 303)].

"Associations of the faithful which are erected by competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations (Canon 301§3)." In the decree of erection, the competent authority must bestow public juridic personality on the association and grant it a mission by which it formally acts in the name of the Church (Canon 313). Only the Holy See, a conference of bishops or a diocesan bishop has the authority to erect a public association of the faithful (Canon 312). Before issuing a decree of erection, the competent authority must approve its statutes (Canon 314).

Only a public association can receive a mission to teach Christian doctrine in the name of the Church, promote public worship or pursue a purpose which by nature is reserved to

ecclesiastical authority (Canon 301§1). As a public association, the members act in the name of the Church when fulfilling the purpose of the association. Because of its public nature, the authority who erected it has direct supervision over the association and specifically has the right to confirm the election of the moderator, install a moderator presented or name a moderator in accord with the approved statutes; name the chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant (Canon 317§1); designate a trustee to temporarily direct the association (Canon 318§1); remove the moderator for a just cause (Canon 318§2); direct and audit the administration of goods and reception of offerings and alms (Canon 319); suppress the association or otherwise declare it extinct in accord with law (Canons 320, 120§1).

In contrast, private associations exist by private agreement, freely made among members of the Christian faithful, with the intent to attain the aims mentioned in canon 298§1 (Canon 299§1). By far, private associations of the faithful are the most flexible and less restrictive means for the Christian faithful to pursue a common purpose as a group. While ecclesiastical authority maintains a certain degree of vigilance over private associations as noted above, the guidance and direction of the association comes from the members in accord with its statutes (Canon 321). Any further influence and involvement by ecclesiastical authority depends on the level of recognition the association seeks. From least to most structured, private associations are categorized as de facto, recognized, praised or recommended and private with juridic personality. Unless a private association receives juridic personality from competent ecclesiastical authority, the association itself has no rights or obligations in law. However, its members may collectively assert their rights and obligations, even by proxy (Canon 310). This will be further discussed in the example below.

A de facto association of the faithful exists by common agreement among its members but has no recognition from Church authority. Because this type of association seeks no recognition from the Church, its statutes do not require review by ecclesiastical authority.

This lack of review of statutes allows great flexibility in development and discharge of the apostolate. It also encourages less structure, which may promote conflict, division and ultimately the demise of the association. The lack of review of statutes by competent authority encourages a perception of secrecy. For this reason, the law clearly states that “no private association of the Christian faithful in the Church is recognized unless its statutes are reviewed by competent authority (Canon 299).”

Due to the necessity of structure for a de facto association to survive and flourish, all members should have opportunity to participate in the writing of clear and concise statutes. The members should exercise cooperation, flexibility and most importantly sincerity of faith. Its moderator should possess strong administrative skills and a deep knowledge of the Catholic Church.

A de facto association that allows its statutes to be reviewed by competent ecclesiastical authority receives recognition as an association by that very fact (Canon 299§3). It is not necessary that the association receives approval of its statutes, nor that it even receives formal recognition. This presentation of statutes to the competent authority, usually the diocesan bishop, is simply a way of informing the bishop that an association exists with a specific purpose congruent with those mentioned in canon 298§1. Because the association

allows its structure and objectives to be known to competent authority, this step of recognition encourages greater dialogue and cooperation between the members of the association and the formal structures of the Church. At the same time, the association enjoys the same autonomy a de facto association enjoys. (Many canon lawyers legitimately hold the opinion that being “recognized” requires a formal statement from competent authority. They further argue that being recognized is part of being praised and recommended. Anyone seeking these levels of approval should accept the opinion held by the authority approached)

An association that is praised or recommended by Church authority but does not possess juridic personality enjoys similar autonomy and flexibility. The main difference rests in the level of review by competent ecclesiastical authority. While the law does not explicitly state that the bishop must approve the statutes before praising or recommending the association, certainly no bishop will praise or recommend a group that he does not agree with. If the association wants his praise and recommendation, it will have to accept his critiques and suggestions.

Finally, a private association can receive private juridic personality. This occurs only after the competent authority has reviewed and approved the statutes and issued a formal decree granting juridic personality (Canon 322). While this is the most structured of private associations, Canon 322 explicitly mentions that the approval of statutes by competent authority does not change its private nature. This clearly demonstrates the intent of the law to protect the autonomy of private associations and allow the Christian faithful to freely guide and direct them according to the prescripts of the statutes (cf. Canon 321). With juridic personality, the association itself has rights and obligations in law. When asserting or vindicating rights and obligations, entering into contracts or performing any public act in the Church, it is not necessary that its members act collectively. Rather, the association itself acts when represented by legitimate authority according to its statutes.

As autonomous of formal Church structures, all private associations freely select their own moderator and officials, freely administer the goods they possess and freely choose their own spiritual advisor, who must be confirmed by the local ordinary (Canons 324, 325).

Use of the Name “Catholic” in Title of Association

According to law, no apostolic endeavor or association shall bear the name “Catholic” without the express permission of competent ecclesiastical authority (Canons 216, 300, 803§3, 808). While this norm is not always known or followed, it is meant to protect the faithful against misrepresentation by groups that do not promote the true Faith. Any association bearing the term “Catholic” in its name should have proof of consent by competent ecclesiastical authority.

How does it all work?

As an example, let us consider the educational endeavors of parents to illustrate the usefulness of these norms. There are a growing number of parents who home school their children. Recognizing their primacy by natural obligation to educate their children, these parents choose to home school for a variety of reasons.

Many parents form or join home schooling associations. When an active association exists with the purpose of promoting and supporting the parents' primary obligation to educate their children, home schooling endeavors seem to produce more fruit. Furthermore, they are better able to resolve conflicts, both internal and external. Without proper structure, both internal and external conflicts can cause the demise of an association.


Even though a home schooling association may be incorporated in secular law, unless the diocesan bishop reviews its statutes, it has no recognition in Canon Law. Unless the association has juridic personality, the association itself has no rights in law. That means when the parents want to respond to an issue within a canonical forum, they must do so collectively. This is done in one of two ways. Either all parents can represent themselves as a crowd--which may not be too effective—or each parent can sign a mandate granting authority to one or several persons to act on behalf of all.

To establish a viable association of the faithful, regardless of its focus, I offer three suggestions. First, draft a mission statement and rules of conduct (statutes) that govern the daily operation of the association. If civilly incorporated, many elements from the by-laws can be used. Secondly, mail your bishop a letter introducing the existence of the association and enclose a copy of the statutes for his review. It is not necessary that you ask for his approval. It is extremely helpful that he knows of the existence of the association and that you promote constructive dialogue. Finally, it is possible that the statutes of the association would include a proxy mandate granting the moderator, either alone or with other officers, the necessary authority to represent the members in an ecclesiastical forum. If this were done, each member would have to sign a copy of the mandate so the one delegated could prove his delegation. These three steps would encourage a viable and unified association, encourage dialogue and trust with ecclesiastical authorities and provide great flexibility in the discharge of business, particularly when issues arise that require immediate attention.

In closing, I emphasize a self-evident truth often overlooked. Man is a social creature. As such, we are interdependent on others in our pursuit for heaven's glory. God created us male and female and ordered us to fill the earth and subdue it. We cannot subdue the earth alone. By divine institution of marriage we fill the earth and by the natural use of associations, freely formed and directed in Christian charity, we can subdue the earth, conquering all for Christ and His bride the Church. Christ Himself did not go it alone. He first chose to be a part of a family. He then chose twelve apostles to assist Him in His public ministry. In addition to the twelve, there were many others, even women, who followed Him and promoted His works. Prayerfully, let us follow His example.


A Ministry of Service: The Cooperator Delegate

ACKNOWLEDGMENT


 Salesian Father Patrick Laws, the National Delegate for the Salesian Cooperators in Australia, has written numerous practical pamphlets on the Cooperator as a vehicle for better understanding and implementing the **Regulations of Apostolic Life**.^{*} This pamphlet *A Ministry of Service: The Cooperator Delegate* is one of this series. Father Laws has made an excellent contribution to the scarce materials in English on the Cooperators Movement. We are grateful to him for permission to take his original work and to adapt it to our needs in the United States. May this treatment of the Cooperator Delegate be a help to all who are called upon to animate the Salesian Cooperators.

INTRODUCTION

In 1874, Don Bosco consulted his followers about the establishment of the *Association of St. Francis of Sales* which would rapidly evolve into the Salesian Cooperators. They thought, the **Biographical Memoirs** tell us, that Don Bosco wanted to found another confraternity or pious sodality "of little or no purpose" and let him know their lack of enthusiasm. The account continues:

 Don Bosco listened smiling and then exclaimed, 'You have not...grasped my idea, but you will see that this association will become the bulwark of our Society. Think about it!' [X, 560]

"The bulwark!" Perhaps we need to go on thinking about it! The direction of Don Bosco's thought is: *The purpose of this Association is to unite the laity and priests in undertaking whatever will be conducive to God's greater glory and the salvation of souls.* In his second draft of the Cooperator Regulations, Don Bosco emphasizes even more his favorite theme of working together, invoking his often quoted proverb, "Unity is strength. A triple-spun cord is hard to break."

 One hundred and twenty years later, Pope John Paul II will write, "A proper understanding [of the mission and responsibility of lay Christians in the Church and in the world] can only be found in the living context of the Church as communion [**Christifideles Laici**, # 18].

Don Bosco never worked alone. He never saw the work as *his*. There is ample evidence that he formed his collaborators, both by offering them the opportunity and the means, to be apostles. The Salesian Cooperators are not a group of people who do our bidding, who depend on us. They are, rather, a group of *baptized and confirmed Christians carrying out their God-given mission in the Church, with whom we work and minister in the spirit of Don Bosco.* To minister is to be servant to. This booklet is about the art of being servant to, and yet equal partner with, the Salesian Cooperators.

Rev. Patrick J. Laws, S.D.B.

Australian National Delegate

[Editors' Note: If today we look into GC 24, we find an affirmation of the above introduction in article 77: **The Cooperators:** From the time of Don Bosco to the Special General Chapter there were no outstanding changes in the understanding of the vocation of the Cooperators. The GC19 and especially the GC20 (SGC) brought about a radical change of mentality. They can no longer be seen as simple benefactors or executors. They must be recognized rather as full sharers in the responsibility for the Salesian mission and points of reference for lay people in the broad Salesian movement. This was the sense in which their new Regulations for Apostolic Life were approved in 1986.] * **This pamphlet was written making reference to the Cooperators' Regulations for Apostolic Life of 1986.**

WHAT THE DOCUMENTS SAY

For the **Salesian of Don Bosco** Article 5 of his Constitutions says it all. There, the same exhilarating picture is drawn of a "vast movement of people...in communion...[with] the same spirit...and... specifically distinct vocations..." the *Salesian Family*. The same article assigns to the Salesians "particular responsibilities" which come direct from the *will of the founder*

- to preserve unity of spirit;
- to foster dialogue and collaboration.

The Salesian Regulations devote a whole Chapter [IV] to our service to the Salesian Family. Regulation 36 establishes a vital link between the Salesian Family and the Salesians of Don Bosco which begins with the Director and passes through the Community. The Delegate is not *out there* somewhere: he represents the religious community and its Director and has a right to their support. According to Regulation 38, the spread and support of the Cooperators is the *duty* of the community. It will carry out this duty by

- helping in the formation process;
- spreading knowledge of the Cooperator vocation especially among our more committed young people and our lay collaborators.

For the **Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**, the support of their specific contribution as a living part of the Salesian Family is offered to the Salesian Cooperators, amongst others. One would also presume that this *specific contribution* would stem also from the status of the FMA as religious women.

Regulation 59 emphasizes the choice and formation of lay collaborators, prioritizing past pupils and parents.

As we might expect, the **Regulations of Apostolic Life** [RAL] of the **Salesian Cooperator** are quite specific about the duties of the SDB/FMA Delegates. RAL #46 is strikingly concise and to the point in its job-description of the Delegate: "They are spiritual animators responsible for Salesian and apostolic formation."

The rest of this booklet will attempt to tease out the varied implications of that terse and to-the-point description. Lest we forget, however, RAL #38 §2 reminds us that Cooperators and Delegate *share* responsibility.

THE TASK IN DETAIL

Formation

As was just noted, the principal task of the Delegate is that of *formation*, whether personally, or together with members of the Local Center who might be entrusted with the task.



"Formation", we read in *Christifideles Laici*, "is not the privilege of the few, but a right and duty of all" [#63]. To admit people to the ranks of the Cooperators without any serious formation is to make the strongest statement possible that the Association is not worth belonging to; that, in fact, we Salesians regard it as a trivial and ineffectual way of being apostolic.

Formation has a number of purposes. Initially it aims to help the individual:

- to *understand* her/his Baptismal call to proclaim the Gospel, to be an apostle;
- to *refine* that call by giving it purpose and direction;
- to *specify* the call by spelling out its Salesian dimension.

This is in fact the task of the *Initial Formation Program*.

Secondly, the formation process

- heightens the apostle's awareness of being Church;
- focuses the sense of *communion*, of being one;
- deepens the apostle's life of prayer;
- imparts apostolic insights and skills;
- increases understanding of the Church's life and teaching;
- creates a Salesian context or style to apostolic work;
- offers encouragement and affirmation in apostolic work;
- favors personal and collective growth;
- provides opportunities for apostolate.

This is done through the program of *Ongoing Formation*.

These tasks require the Delegate to fill a number of roles.

THE DELEGATE AS TEACHER

The Delegate offers the Local Center both knowledge and experience on a number of fronts:

Firstly, as a teacher of *Salesianity*.

i] Do not assume that all Cooperators know about Don Bosco's life and work, or that of the other Salesian greats: Mother Mazzarello, Don Rua, Don Rinaldi, etc. Tell the stories that make up the Salesian Dream that is our heritage, that explain our position and role in the Church and in the world of the young. Build up a little lending library of Salesian biographies and literature, and make sure the Cooperators know where it can be found!

ii] Inform the Cooperators about the life and work of the Salesians in the world. Give them a world vision of Salesian work, especially that of the Cooperators. Do they receive the *Salesian Bulletin*, our Cooperator Newsletter, other Province publications?

iii] Help the Cooperators understand their own Rule of Life, ***Regulations of Apostolic Life***. Pursuing a way of life traced out in a Rule is what we do as religious. We are used to living by a code, to understanding it as a combination of prescription, ideal, and range of possibilities. Our Cooperators sometimes do not; they may regard the Rule as a list of things to be carried out. We need to "decipher the code" for them.

iv] Above all, meeting with the SDB/FMA religious, seeing our works in action — in short, experiencing the Salesian life as it is lived — is a powerful school of Salesian formation. Happy those center where Cooperators are welcomed at our table.

v] Articles 6, 23, and 24 of RAL recognize the special ministry of the Rector Major to the Association. He teaches with authority concerning our Salesian Family and will continue to do so. Share with and explain to the Cooperators his writings that pertain to the Cooperators and our Salesian heritage. His word is the source of Salesian authenticity!

Secondly, the Delegate teaches *how to be Church*. This is a vast topic, and one can only hint at what might be involved.

i] The Local Center forms part of the *local Church*, i.e., the Diocese and the Parish. The Cooperators need to be aware of what are the anxieties, hopes, and aims of the Bishop of the local Church. The gradual demise of the diocesan press makes this more difficult. At the very least, we can draw attention to pronouncements and initiatives we are aware of. In particular, we should encourage our Cooperators who are actively involved in the local Church to report and comment from time to time on their activity.

ii] At a recent *ad limina* visit, the Bishops of Malaysia complained to the Pope that so many documents were coming out that they could not keep up with them. Imagine us ordinary folk! But we can draw attention to Papal documents that concern us, as for example ***Christifideles Laici***, the Pope's addresses to both the young and the Salesian Family, and so on. As Salesians we are committed to upholding the teaching and pastoral office of the Pope.

iii] Sometimes, books and articles appear, or events happen in the Church that can enrich our understanding and appreciation of being Catholic. Let us bring these to the attention of our Cooperators for discussion and reflection.

iv] A study of ***Christifideles Laici***, especially numbers 25-31 which treats the laity's participation in the ministry of the Church, is a must for every Delegate, not to mention our Cooperators!

Thirdly the Delegate is a teacher of Prayer. This is an area in which we instinctively feel deficient, yet it is not a question of knowing a lot of theory as much as sharing how to pray!

i] First and foremost, we should offer our Cooperators *authentic experiences of prayer*. Well prepared Eucharistic celebrations and homilies, different prayer experiences for the opening and closing prayers of our meetings, times for recollection and retreat, and moments of silence become a true school of prayer. The key is good preparation!

ii] We do not always need to be the prayer-leader, but we do need to guide our people, to teach them by precept and example, how to lead others in prayer.

iii] Thirty minutes browsing in a Catholic bookshop will turn up any number of collections or source books from which prayers, or services of prayer can be borrowed. In your Cooperator file, keep a folder for prayers and services you collect on your rounds.

iv] Despite some of the weighty books published on the subject, both St Francis of Sales and Don Bosco consider praying to be a simple, uncomplicated activity. Here is Don Bosco, writing for adults:

To pray means to raise one's heart to God and to spend time with him by means of holy thoughts and devout sentiments. For this reason, every thought of God and every glance directed at him is prayer...Therefore, whoever thinks about God and about his infinite perfections, and finds in these thoughts feelings of joy, reverence, love, admiration, that person prays. Whoever considers what great benefits have been received from the Creator, Preserver, and Father, and feels moved to gratitude, that person prays. Whoever in moments of danger...aware of his own weakness, begs the Lord to help him, that person prays. Finally if one, in the sorrow of his heart turns to God remembering he has insulted his own Father, offended his judge, and lost his supreme good, and begs pardon and proposes amendment, that person prays. So you see, prayer is something very easy.

Finally, the Delegate is a teacher of *Apostolate*.



Pope John Paul II says it in very few words when he writes in ***Christifideles Laici*** of groups and associations "offering a formation through a deeply shared experience in the apostolic life."

i] In the apostolic life, the Delegate is a *professional*, having a wealth of experiences, successes and failures. We can share those experiences, and the insights they bring, with our Cooperators. Many athletes found new success after meeting a famous player who said, "Look, if you hold the ball this way...." Our expertise is real, and the sharing of it need not involve lengthy presentations, so much as an occasional perceptive comment, or wise suggestion.

On the other hand, the Spirit breathes where he wills. Experience shows this amongst our Cooperators among whom are often found people with a deep and rich apostolic experience. Our art is to draw that out, to gently dispel the idea that the experience of evangelization is confined to priests or religious. Parents, for example, know a great deal about working with the young!

As the Pope puts it, *a deeply shared experience*.

ii] Evangelization and the apostolate involve a meeting between the Gospel and culture. The Pope and our Rector Major have been speaking insistently in our times of a "new evangelization".

Its content and direction are spelled out in numbers 34—44 of ***Christifideles Laici***. Reading these numbers will offer solid and worthwhile directions for responding to our Baptismal call to be apostles in the way the Church is calling us. An example will clarify the matter.

In #36, Pope John Paul II speaks eloquently of "Promoting the Dignity of the Person". Begin by asking questions:

- In what ways is the dignity of the human person—youth, the poor, spouses, minorities, etc.—threatened here in our country, in our state, in our city, in our suburb, in our parish?
- What are its causes?

These questions are not an invitation to indulge in hand-wringing pessimism, but to *understand the nature of the challenge*. Then the vital question becomes "What can I/we do, not just to oppose the ill, but to put justice and right in its place?"

Only then can strategies be planned and structures put in place where required. In short, things can be changed for the better. [The true apostle is not a first-aid officer!]

Obviously, the dignity of the human person is a complex matter, not readily disposed of in a few lines. The above constitutes an invitation, not a program.

iii] To be apostolic often involves meeting opposition, or even making mistakes. The Delegate, who has already had similar experiences, is in a privileged position to support, encourage, even correct, and to help others to deal with similar experiences.

iv] Apostolic activity cannot be set in concrete: we work in the present world, not the idealized one of 100 years ago. For this reason, *evaluation* which calmly judges the effect—positive and negative—of our world is an activity the Delegate should encourage and be humble enough to be part of.

THE DELEGATE AT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

This booklet is not the place to go into details, but it seems to be generally held that *spiritual direction* is misunderstood in the Salesian world at the moment.

Part of that problem could lie with how we understand the term. Perhaps we think of spiritual direction exclusively in terms of two people seated opposite each other in armchairs, one of whom reveals the inmost depths, while the other nods wisely, occasionally interjecting an "Uh-huh" or a "And how do you feel about that?"

Naturally, the Delegate should be one who is willing, and who is seen to be willing, to make time to receive the individual Cooperator, to listen, to guide.

In particular, the Delegate who is a priest will be open to requests for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

In addition to those things, Spiritual Direction comes in many guises.

i] Preaching—good preaching based on the Scriptures.

ii] Some centers have the custom of the traditional *Good Night* at the close of their meetings, a classical Salesian occasion for spiritual direction.

iii] There is no indication in the literature that the *word in the ear* technique was used by Don Bosco exclusively for young people. In many ways, it is the Salesian *art of arts*, and needs a measure of practice to apply correctly.

iv] Don Bosco's correspondence is full of letters of spiritual direction. What about your letters to the Center or individual Cooperators?

v] Generally speaking, Salesian spiritual direction is intimately connected with presence, with mutuality—in simple terms, with friendship!

vi] Our spiritual Master is Francis de Sales. Perhaps his writings are not known by us as well as they should be [*Introduction to the Devout Life*, and *Treatise on the Love of God*].

Spiritual Direction, then, happens with the individual and in the setting of the group. Its aim is growth in the knowledge and love of God. It is ordered in freedom and never to be imposed!

THE DELEGATE AS ONE WHO "ENABLES" OR "EMPOWERS"

This role is the consequence of all the other things that have been said. Like any good educator, our basic task is to render ourselves superfluous, that is to equip those to whom we are sent so effectively that they no longer need us. To do this is art indeed! It requires several attitudes or qualities of us.

i] Basically, we are in the business of helping our Cooperators discern their God-given gifts and to use them effectively. As one writer puts it, this is "wisdom, rather than science." In a sense, we *let the Spirit loose* in people's lives and help them respond to that awakening.

ii] This means we are not *in charge*, we *own* no one. In fact, we need to be convinced that one of the most powerful signs of the times is the calling out of lay leadership in the Church: the practical recognition by the Church of the call offered in Baptism and Confirmation to *each believer*. The leader of the Cooperator Center is the Coordinator. You are that person's servant, guide, support, consolation.

EPILOGUE

In compiling these few thoughts, I have constantly searched for an image of the Delegate, and in doing so, have constantly come back to that of the sheep-dog.

Analogies limp, but that trusty animal is in a state of constant response, turning now this way, now that. Running at full speed, dropping motionless to the ground. Sometimes leading, sometimes driving, sometimes bringing back the stray. Anticipating, responding. Barking when required, but not biting. All these things under the command of the master whose final responsibility the sheep are. Finally, there will be times when it simply jumps up behind the drover and enjoys the ride, grinning proudly at the thought of the job well done, of the new challenge awaiting; all the while, enjoying being carried for a little by *the Boss*.

After all, it was *the Boss* who said, "I know my sheep, and mine know me."

New Methodology of Formation



adapted from: *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of the Salesian Cooperators*

Author: *ad hoc Commission*

The Association supports the formation of the Salesian Cooperators in the maturation of their personal vocational choice and its continual development. This is a formation program which makes some concrete opportunities available to each person and, therefore, integrates personal formation and nourishes the sense of belonging to the Church, to the Association itself, and to the Salesian Family.

The formation offered by the Association obeys certain criteria which work together to render it fruitful and efficacious. It is a formation that is:

- ◆ *holistic*: It tends to help each person's growth process in all the dimensions of his life – as a human being, as a Christian, as a Salesian, and in his lay or priestly identity;
- ◆ *built on reflection and prayer*: It is centered on the Word of God, the font of truth and of discernment. Reference to the Word of God must constitute the fundamental orientation of every experience or formative initiative within the Association;
- ◆ *gradual*: It is regulated by the pace of assimilation and interior maturation and not only by the theoretical treatment of the topics of study;
- ◆ *adapted to the context* in which one lives: When planning formation initiatives, those who are responsible for formation within the Association will be attentive to the journey of the Local Center at one and the same time as they are open to the indications and concerns of the broader formative, pastoral, ecclesial, and Salesian plans, as well as those of the Association itself at higher levels;
- ◆ *personalized*: It is adapted to the personal situations of each Aspirant or member, responding to the particular needs and demands for each one's growth and maturation;
- ◆ *exigent*: Thus, it requires a demanding and continuous process. This particular task finds its most authentic motivations in the desire to grow to be an ever more mature gift for one's companions on the journey and to all those for whom one's apostolic commitment is intended;
- ◆ *experiential*: It begins with life and returns to life, calling upon one "to be" and "to do" and stimulating one's personal growth in sanctification and apostolic action;
- ◆ *group-oriented*: It is open to help from all and in it all feel co-responsible and work together for a reciprocal enrichment; and, finally,
- ◆ *marked by*: the dynamic of *seeing – evaluating – acting*. The starting point is determined through an analysis of one's personal or social situation, as evaluated through a true and proper spiritual discernment, with the goal of intervening in the most appropriate and informed way possible.

Built on these premises, the topic of the "dimensions" and the "pillars" of formation is tackled. They are the foundational elements of the *new model of formation* being proposed as consistent with the new progress made in the science of formation, and, in particular, in the *formation of adults*. The Salesian Cooperator must grow as a human being, as a Christian, and as a Salesian (the three dimensions), using those means which are opportune in caring

for his *knowledge*, his *skills and abilities*, his *identity*, and his *capacity for relationship* (the four pillars), in reference to those three dimensions.

Both the significance and the way of going about formation have changed profoundly in today's cultural and social context. The understanding has grown that good formation cannot content itself with developing only theoretical knowledge but must also reach to the levels of a man or a woman's *skills and abilities* so as to be able to help one mature in his or her own *identity* and *relational capabilities*.

This understanding, born and shared at all levels in the area of formation within universities, colleges, and technical schools, may contribute in planning anew every educational itinerary based on the four different foundations or *pillars* of the formative experience: *knowing*, *knowing how to do* something, *knowing how to be*, and *knowing how to live in communion*. [This last *pillar* was added to the classic triad (*To Know, To Know How to Do, To Know How to Be*) beginning in AD Nineteen Ninety-Six, at the suggestion of a UNESCO committee, presided by Jacques Delors, France's ex-Economic and Finance Minister, when called upon to reflect on the topic of education in a changing world. The *Delors Report on Education for the XXI Century* was addressed to governments and, more generally, to all those who are responsible for devising and implementing plans and initiatives in the area of formation.]

The significance and particular objective of each of these pillars of formation are as follows:

- * *knowing* refers to that *knowledge* which one needs to acquire in relationship to the maturation of a specific identity; in our context, this means always keeping in mind the identity of the Salesian Cooperator;
- * *knowing how to* refers to a series of *abilities, skills, and competencies* required to meet the different situations in which the Salesian Cooperator finds himself as he lives out and expresses this specific identity;
- * *knowing how to be* is where the two preceding pillars converge and from which they draw meaning: it refers to those *values, attitudes, and motivations* which determine, at a personal and profound level, one's being; i.e., the *identity itself* of the Salesian Cooperator; and
- * *knowing how to live in communion* refers to the development of an understanding of others and of valuing relational and *community* aspects.

These four pillars should not be thought of as successive stages along the formative path; on the contrary, they are to be harmonized in one sole process and considered complementary and contemporaneous in carrying out each individual formation initiative. However, it is very useful to distinguish among them and consider them individually for the purpose of better planning, both for formation in general and for the particular goal of each individual initiative.

The *Project of Apostolic Life*, then, suggests that three different *dimensions* in the formative experience of the Cooperators be considered: *Man, Christian, and Salesian*. Article sixteen of the *Regulations* states:



Conscious of the importance of on-going formation, the Salesian Cooperators:

- develop their own human gifts, so that they might fulfill ever better their family, professional, and civic responsibilities;
- mature in their faith and in charity, growing in union with God, to render their life more Gospel-like and more Salesian; and
- dedicate time to reflection and study to deepen Sacred Scripture, the Doctrines of the Church, their knowledge of Don Bosco, and Salesian documents.

Human maturity, Christian sanctity, awareness and realization of one's own Salesian vocation: these are, therefore, the three horizons, or the three "dimensions" of the formative experience. With the goal of re-planning initial and ongoing formation and that of the leadership and of the Formators, one must ask, then, what is important *to know*, what is worthwhile *to know how to do*, whom does one need *to know how to be* and what that means, and what does one need in order *to know how to live in communion*, concretely-speaking, for each of these three dimensions.