

# THE ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

## *Project of Apostolic Life*

### STATUTES

#### *Preface*

Diverse are the paths offered to Christians for living out their Baptismal faith. Some, through the urging of the Holy Spirit and attracted by the person of Don Bosco, realize their ideal of “working with him” while remaining in the world. These persons are called to live out, in the lay or clerical state, the same charism as the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

From the very start, Don Bosco thought about organizing the “co-helpers” of his work. He invited lay people, men and women, and members of the diocesan clergy to “cooperate” in his mission of salvation of the young, especially of those who are poor and abandoned. In 1876 he clearly defined their project of life in the *Regulations for the Salesian Cooperators* which he himself wrote and which were then approved by the Church.<sup>1</sup> Today Salesian Cooperators are spread throughout the world and work at that level.

The present text describes the *Project of Apostolic Life*. It offers an authentic path of sanctification, “to exercise charity by working for the salvation of souls.” Salesian Cooperators<sup>2</sup> trust in the fidelity of God the Father, Who called them.

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<sup>1</sup>Salvatore Magnasco. “Decree of December 12, 1877.” *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Eugenio Ceria, SDB. Diego Borgatello, SDB, ed. Vol. XIII. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1983) 467-468. Print.

<sup>2</sup>Eugenio Ceria, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Diego Borgatello, SDB, ed. Vol. XI. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1964) 70-72. Print.

«You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,  
and have appointed you that you should go and  
bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.»  
(Jn. 15:16)

## Chap. I

### THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR, IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY AND IN THE WORLD

#### Art. 1 The Founder: a Man Sent by God

To contribute to the salvation of youth, “the most delicate and most precious portion of human society,”<sup>3</sup> the Holy Spirit, through the maternal intervention of Mary, raised up St. John Bosco, who founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales (1859) and, together with Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872). He extended the apostolic energy of the Salesian charism by officially setting up the “Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators,” the third branch of the Family (1876), united to the Society of St. Francis de Sales (also called the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco or the Salesian Congregation).

The Holy Spirit formed the heart of a father and teacher in St. John Bosco, one capable of total dedication, inspiring him with an educational method permeated by the charity of the Good Shepherd.

#### Art. 2 Salesian Cooperators: a Specific Vocation in the Church

§1. To commit oneself to be a Salesian Cooperator means to respond to the apostolic Salesian Vocation, gift of the Spirit, 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.

§2. Catholics of whatever cultural or social circumstance can follow this path. They feel called to live their faith life fully involved in each day’s concerns, characterized by two attitudes:

- a) knowing God as Father and the Love which saves; encountering in the Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ the perfect Apostle of the Father; living in intimacy with the Holy Spirit, Who animates the People of God in the world;

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<sup>3</sup>Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Diego Borgatello, SDB, ed. Vol. II. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1966) 35. Print.  
Ibid. Vol. VII. 171.

- b) feeling called and sent on a concrete mission: to contribute to the salvation of youth, committing themselves to Don Bosco's very mission to the young and to ordinary folk.<sup>4</sup>

### **Art. 3 One Vocation: Two Ways to Live It**

§1. Don Bosco conceived the Association of Salesian Cooperators as being open both to the laity and to the secular clergy.

§2. Lay Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolic commitment and live the Salesian spirit, with lay characteristics and sensitivities, in the ordinary situations of life and of work.<sup>5</sup>

§3. Secular bishops, priests, and deacons who are Salesian Cooperators live their ministry taking inspiration from the pastoral charity of Don Bosco, whose priestly life is a model of one which gives pride of place to working with commitment in behalf of young people and in places where ordinary folk work and live.

### **Art. 4 The Association in the Church**

§1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is approved by the Apostolic See<sup>6</sup> as a public Association of the Faithful and shares in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

The members actively collaborate in its mission, in the name of the Church, under the authority of the Rector Major as Don Bosco's Successor, in a spirit of fidelity to its Pastors and in collaboration with other ecclesial forces.

§2. Salesian Cooperators manifest a filial devotion to the Supreme Pontiff.

§3. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is recognized as a public ecclesiastical juridical person<sup>7</sup>. It has its headquarters in Rome.

### **Art. 5 The Association in the Salesian Family**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators is one of the Groups of the Salesian Family. Together with the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help

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<sup>4</sup>Giovanni Bosco. *Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Society*. Trans. Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. 42-49. Art. IV. Web. 30 Nov. 2013. <http://cooperatori.sdb.org/cooperatori/files/regvitaaping.pdf>

<sup>5</sup>Canon Law Society of America. *Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*. (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) can. 278. Print.

<sup>6</sup>Pius IX. "Cum Sicuti." *Memorie Biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*. Eugenio Ceria, SDB. Vol. XI. (Torino: Pia Società Salesiana, 1930) 546-547. Print. (found in Italian version only).

John Paul II, RVA (5/9/1986), Prot.n.T9-1/1986 – Benedict XVI, PVA *ad experimentum* (3/15/2007), Prot.n.T9-1/2006 – Francis, Definitive PVA (4/29/2013)

<sup>7</sup>*Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*. Can. 313.

of Christians, and other officially-recognized Groups<sup>8</sup>, it is a bearer of the common Salesian Vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco's project in the Church and in the world.

The Association brings 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.

#### **Art. 6 Salesian Cooperators: Salesians in the World**

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. They work 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.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Superior Council of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco. "Guidelines Adopted by the Superior Council for Acceptance into the Salesian Family." Trans. *Acts of the General Council*. 304.2 (1982): 61-65. Print.

<sup>9</sup>Pascual Chavez, SDB. *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco (Salesian Family Charter)*. Trans. (Rome: Tipografia Vaticana, 2012) 25-26. Print.

*«You are the salt of the earth... You are  
the light of the world... let your light shine  
before men, in order that they may see  
your good works and give glory  
to your Father in Heaven.»  
(Mt. 5:13-16)*

## Chap. II

### THE APOSTOLIC COMMITMENT OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR

#### **Art. 7    The Witness of the Beatitudes**

The lifestyle of a Salesian Cooperator, marked by the spirit of the Beatitudes, commits him or her to the evangelization of culture and of social life.<sup>10</sup> For this reason the Cooperator, being rooted in Christ and aware that all baptized people are called to the perfection of love, lives and gives witness to:

- a life lived according to the Spirit, as the source of joy, peace, and forgiveness;
- freedom, in obedience to God's plan, appreciating the value and autonomy proper to secular realities, committing themselves to direct these, above all, to the service of persons;
- Gospel poverty, administering the goods entrusted to them using the criteria of temperance and of sharing, in view of the common good;
- a sexuality according to a Gospel vision of chastity, marked by delicacy and a joyful married or celibate life, lived with integrity and based on love;
- that mercy which opens one's heart to all material and moral miseries and urges one to work with pastoral charity;
- justice to build a more fraternal world that recognizes and promotes the rights of all, especially of the weakest;
- a firm will to be a builder of peace in a world agitated by violence and class hatred.

This way of love for God and for others is a sure path towards sanctity.

#### **Art. 8    Apostolic Commitment**

§1. Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolate, first of all, through their daily tasks. They follow Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, sent by the Father to serve the people of the

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<sup>10</sup>John Paul II. *Christifideles Laici*. Par. 16. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html)

Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et Spes*. Par. 72. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)

world. This is why they are committed to putting into practice the Gospel ideal of love for God and for one's neighbor in the ordinary circumstances of life.<sup>11</sup>

§2. Animated by the Salesian spirit, they give special attention to young people, especially to those who are poorest or victims of any kind of marginalization, exploitation, or violence; to those setting out in the world of work; and to those who show signs of a specific Vocation.

§3. They foster and defend the value of the family<sup>12</sup> - the basic nucleus of society and of the Church - and are committed to construct it as "a domestic Church"<sup>13</sup>. Married Salesian Cooperators live their mission through their marriage as "co-operators with the love of God the Creator" and as "the first and chief educators of their children," according to the pedagogy of goodness proper to the Preventive System.

§4. They are attentive to the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church and to social communications so as to foster educational journeys to grow in these areas.

§5. They support the Church's missionary activity and commit themselves to educate to a global perspective as an opening to dialogue among cultures.

#### **Art. 9 Task of Christian Education**

§1. Salesian Cooperators, like Don Bosco, bring the task of educating and evangelizing<sup>14</sup> everywhere, in order to form "honest citizens, good Christians, and blessed inhabitants of Heaven," who know that they are always on the journey to a greater human and Christian maturity.

§2. They share with the young their enthusiasm for living with authenticity the values of truth, freedom, justice, the sense of the common good, and of service.

§3. They educate the young to encounter the Risen Christ – in our Faith and in the Sacraments – so they may find in Him the meaning of their life so as to grow as "new men and new women".

§4. They are committed to helping the young develop a life plan which will give witness to their Christian and Salesian presence in the Church and in society.

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<sup>11</sup>*Gaudium et Spes*. Par. 45.

<sup>12</sup>*Christifideles Laici*. Par. 40.

<sup>13</sup>Vatican Council II. *Lumen Gentium*. Par. 11. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

<sup>14</sup>Viganò, Egidio, SDB. "The Salesian Educational Project." Trans. *Acts of the General Council*. 290.3 (1978) 27-39. Print.

## **Art. 10 The Pedagogy of Goodness**

In their educational task, Salesian Cooperators:

§1. put into practice Don Bosco's "Preventive System," a spiritual and educative experience which is based on reason, religion, and loving-kindness<sup>15</sup>;

§2. foster a family environment in which constant dialogue, an animating presence, personal accompaniment, and group experience help all perceive God's presence;

§3. promote the good and educate to a love for life, to responsibility, solidarity, sharing, synergy, and communion;

§4. appeal to a person's inner resources and believe in the invisible action of grace. They look at each young person with realistic optimism, convinced of the educational value of the faith experience. Their relationship with the young is inspired by a mature and welcoming love.

## **Art. 11 Typical Activities**

Salesian Cooperators are open to varied forms of apostolate. Among these they give a privileged place to family life, besides their own work and their life in the Association<sup>16</sup>:

- Christian catechesis and formation;
- animation of youth and family groups and movements;
- collaboration in educational and scholastic institutions;
- social service among the poor;
- work in social communications;
- cooperation in pastoral ministry for Vocations;
- missionary work;
- collaboration in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue;
- witness to their own faith in socio-political service;
- the development of the Association.

## **Art. 12 Structures and Ways in Which They Work**

§1. Salesian Cooperators participate in the mission of the Association in the Church and reinforce it with their own commitment and by involving other persons.

§2. Normally, the activities of Salesian Cooperators take place, 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.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Giovanni Bosco. *The Preventive System in the Education of the Young*. Trans. Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. 50-54. Web. 30 Nov. 2013. <http://cooperatori.sdb.org/cooperatori/files/regvitaaping.pdf>  
Braido, Pietro, SDB. "Il Sistema Preventivo in un 'Decalogo' per educatori." *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*. 4.1 (1985) 131-148. Print. (available in Italian only)

<sup>16</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. IV, 1.  
*Lumen Gentium*. Par. 35.  
United States Catholic Conference, Inc. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994) nos. 904-906. Print.  
*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. IV, 2-5.

§3. Salesian Cooperators can carry out their apostolic commitment in works run autonomously by the Association and in initiatives which respond to the most pressing needs of their locality.

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<sup>17</sup>Eugenio Ceria, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Trans. Vincent Zuliani, SDB. Vol. XVII. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 2002) 10-11. Print.  
*Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition*. Can. 305.  
*Christifideles Laici*. Par. 42.



*«And what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, these things practice. And the God of peace will be with you.»*  
(Phil. 4:9)

## **Chap. III**

### **THE SALESIAN SPIRIT OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR**

#### **Art. 13 Precious Heritage**

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco lived and passed down to the members of his Family an original style of life and action: the Salesian spirit<sup>18</sup>.

The Salesian spirit is a quintessential Gospel experience, whose source is in the very heart of Christ, who urges those who live it to become gift and to give service. It is nourished by the carrying out of apostolic charity, the principal interior dynamic which unites passion for God and passion for neighbor. It is manifested in a Sacramental spirituality, which is made actual by living daily life with joy and optimism and in responsible service within the ecclesial community and civic society. It requires a demanding “ascetical method” expressed through a serene and joyous countenance, in keeping with Don Bosco’s urging: “work and temperance.”

#### **Art. 14 Experience of a Committed Faith**

§1. The Salesian Cooperator welcomes the Salesian spirit as a gift of the Lord to the Church and makes it fruitful according to his or her own lay or ministerial condition. He or she takes part in the charismatic experience of Don Bosco and commits him or herself to promote Salesian humanism so as to create reasons for hope and future prospects for both the person and for society.<sup>19</sup>

§2. By living Salesian spirituality, he or she fosters a “practical” experience of ecclesial communion.

§3. The Salesian Cooperator entrusts him or herself to the Immaculate Virgin and Help of Christians, for she is the guide of one’s apostolic Vocation: to be a true “co-operator of God” in making His plan of salvation real. He or she asks Mary, the Help of Christians and Mother of the Good Shepherd, for the help and strength necessary for his or her own salvation and for that of the young. The daily entrustment to Mary characterizes Salesian spirituality.

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<sup>18</sup>*Salesian Family Charter*. 37.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.* 15-17.

## **Art. 15 Centrality of Apostolic Love**

§1. The heart of the Salesian spirit is apostolic and pastoral charity. This makes the mercy of the Father, the salvific love of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit present among the young. Don Bosco expressed this with his motto: “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle.*” He signified it in the name “Salesians,” by choosing St. Francis de Sales<sup>20</sup>, model of Christian humanism, of apostolic dedication, and of amiability, and promoter of lay spirituality, as his patron.

§2. This charity is, for Salesian Cooperators, a gift of God, which unites them to Him and to the young. Further, it takes its inspiration from the maternal solicitude of Mary, who supports and sustains them in their daily witness.

## **Art. 16 Salesian Presence in the World**

§1. Salesian Cooperators know they are “in intimate solidarity”<sup>21</sup> with the society in which they live and for which they are called to be light, salt, and leaven. They believe in the interior resources of the person. They share the values of their own culture and they commit themselves to work so that it may be guided by Christian humanism. They promote new realities with a critical Christian sense. They integrate into their life “all that which is good,”<sup>22</sup> adopting a listening stance, especially as regards the young, in discerning the signs of the times.

§2. Faced with socio-cultural challenges<sup>23</sup> and difficulties, they adopt a critical and constructive attitude. They work with commitment to spread a Christian culture and ethic of welcome and solidarity in society.

## **Art. 17 Style of Action**

Salesian Cooperators live as “good Christians and honest citizens,” sanctifying their existence in everyday life and rooting their action in union with God. They believe in the value of life, of giving freely without seeking return, of fraternity, and of “being neighbor.” They cultivate those attitudes which foster education to the joys of daily life and they communicate this to others.

## **Art. 18 Style of Relationships**

Salesian Cooperators, taking their inspiration from the Preventive System of Don Bosco, practice loving-kindness<sup>24</sup> in their relationships as a sign of the love of God and as a means

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<sup>20</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. V, 8.

De Sales, Francis. *On the Love of God*. Trans. John K. Ryan. 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963). Print.

<sup>21</sup>*Gaudium et Spes*. Par. 1.

<sup>22</sup>I Thess. 5:21.

<sup>23</sup>*Gaudium et Spes*. Paragraphs 4 and 11.

<sup>24</sup>Pietro Braido. “I molti volti dell’amorevolezza.” *Rivista di Scienza dell’educazione*. 37.1 (1999) 17-46. Print. (available in Italian only)

to re-awaken His presence in the heart of all those whom they meet. They are always ready to “take the first step” and to welcome others with goodness, respect, and patience. They tend to establish rapports of trust and friendship so as to create a family atmosphere of simplicity and affection. They are peace workers and seek clarification, consensus, and accord in and through dialogue.

#### **Art. 19 Style of Prayer**

§1. Salesian Cooperators are convinced that they can do nothing<sup>25</sup> if they are not in union with Jesus Christ. They invoke the Holy Spirit Who enlightens them and gives them strength day by day. Their prayer, rooted in God’s Word, is simple and trusting, joyous and creative, permeated with apostolic ardor, holding tight to life and extending into it. So as to nourish their prayer life, Salesian Cooperators have recourse to the spiritual resources offered by the Church, by the Association, and by the Salesian Family. They participate actively in the liturgy and value the forms of popular piety which enrich their spiritual life.

§2. They reinvigorate their faith through the Sacraments. They find nourishment in the Eucharist for their apostolic charity. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation they encounter the Mercy of the Father, Who impresses upon their life a dynamic and continuous conversion and makes them grow in their capacity to forgive.

§3. They reinforce their interior and apostolic life with spirituality moments, including those offered by the Association.

#### **Art. 20 In Communion with Mary, Help of Christians, and our Saints**

§1. Salesian Cooperators, like Don Bosco, nurture a filial love for Mary Help of Christians, the Mother of the Church and of humanity.<sup>26</sup> She cooperated in the salvific mission of the Savior and continues to do so also today, as Mother and Helper of the People of God. She is the special guide of the Salesian Family. Don Bosco entrusted the Salesian Cooperators to her so that they might receive protection and inspiration in their mission.

§2. They turn with particular affection to St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. They have trustful recourse to the intercession of St. John Bosco, “Father and Teacher” of the young and of all the Salesian Family.

§3. Among the models of apostolic life, they venerate, with predilection, St. Francis de Sales, St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Alexandrina da Costa, Mamma Margaret, and all the other Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables of the Salesian Family. Knowledge of their lives is a font of inspiration and prayer.

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<sup>25</sup>Jn. 15:5.

Vatican Council II. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. Par. 4. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 26 Nov. 2013. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html)

<sup>26</sup>*Salesian Family Charter*. 53-55.

«...walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called,  
with all humility and meekness, with patience,  
bearing with one another in love, careful to preserve  
the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...»  
(Eph. 4:1-3).

## Chap. IV

### THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR IN COMMUNION AND COLLABORATION

#### Art. 21 Brothers and Sisters in Don Bosco

Their common apostolic Vocation and membership in the same Association makes Salesian Cooperators spiritual brothers and sisters. Indeed, “united with one heart and one soul alone”<sup>27</sup> they live their communion with those bonds characteristic of Don Bosco’s spirit.

They joyously take part in the “family life” of the Association through getting to know each other, growing together, exchanging faith experiences, and working on apostolic projects.

They foster the associative life by welcoming each other reciprocally.<sup>28</sup>

#### Art. 22 Co-responsible in the Mission

§1. The Salesian Cooperator feels responsible for the common mission and carries it out according to his or her own conditions in life, competencies, and possibilities, giving it valuable and substantial support. He or she shares educative and evangelizing co-responsibility in the Association. Each Cooperator must participate in the meetings for programming and evaluating the various activities and in choosing those who will undertake specific responsibilities.

If called to take on particular responsibilities, he or she commits him or herself to carry them out with fidelity and in a spirit of service.

§2. With responsibility and a sense of belonging, every Salesian Cooperator supports the economic autonomy of the Association so that it can carry out its mission.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. I.  
Eccles. 4:2.

<sup>28</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Articles. V, 7 and VII, 4-5.

<sup>29</sup>*Salesian Family Charter.* 34-35.

## **Art. 23 Participation in and Ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family**

§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,"<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

§2. Participation on the Salesian Family Consulta/Commission<sup>32</sup> 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.

## **Art. 24 The Ministry of the Rector Major**

§1. The Rector Major of the Society of St. Francis de Sales is the successor of Don Bosco.<sup>33</sup> Through the explicit will of the Founder, he is the Superior of the Association and carries out the function of Supreme Moderator within it. He guarantees its fidelity to the Founder's Plan and promotes its growth.

§2. In his ministry, exercised also through his Vicar or the World Coordinator, he normally avails himself of the World Council and the World Executive Secretary (the SEM), above all, to animate the entire Association and to coordinate the various formative and apostolic initiatives.

§3. The members of the Association nourish sentiments of sincere affection for the Rector Major and of fidelity to his guidelines.

## **Art. 25 Particular Bonds with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators has a "bond of stable and secure union"<sup>34</sup> with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and particular charismatic ties with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

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<sup>30</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. I.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.* Art. VI, 1.

<sup>32</sup>*Salesian Family Charter.* 66-67.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.* 23.  
*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. V, 3.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.* Articles II and V, 3.

Every Salesian Community (SDB and FMA), at both the Provincial and Local levels, feels 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*.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Art. 26 The Apostolic Service of the Delegates**

§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.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Salesian Society of St. Francis de Sales. *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*. Regulations, art. 38. Trans. (Rome: Esse Gi Esse, 1984) 154-155. Print.

<sup>36</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Art. V, 5.

*«May the Lord make you to increase and abound in charity  
towards one another, and towards all men just as we do  
towards you, that He may strengthen your hearts,  
blameless in holiness before God our Father.»*  
(I Thess. 3:12-13)

## **Chap. V**

### **MEMBERSHIP AND FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR**

#### **Art. 27 Entrance into the Association**

§1. The commitment to become a Salesian Cooperator demands a personal, free, gradual, and motivated choice which matured under the action of the Holy Spirit and the accompaniment of those who have this responsibility.

The person who desires to become part of the Association accepts a formation process, which must cover the fundamental points of the *Project of Apostolic Life* and which takes into account the Aspirant's personal experience. In this way, a proper institutional formation is guaranteed while still being personalized. This personal plan of formation will be adapted by those who are responsible to carry out this role in the Association.

§2. When the Aspirant has reached a sufficient assimilation of the Salesian charism, as recognized by those who are in the position of responsibility in the Local Center, he or she shall present a request for admission. The Aspirant must have reached legal age.

§3. Membership in the Association begins with the pronouncement of the personal Apostolic Promise, by which the Aspirant expresses his or her will to live his/her Baptismal commitments in the light of the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

#### **Art. 28 The Value of Membership**

§1. Salesian Cooperators are aware that membership in the Association nourishes their faith experience and that of ecclesial communion. It represents, moreover, a vital element in support of one's own apostolic Vocation.

§2. Membership demands concrete signs which are expressed both in an active participation in the life of the Association and in a fitting demeanor on the part of the member in his/her daily and professional life.

#### **Art. 29 Responsibilities and Initiatives as Regard Formation**

§1. Salesian Cooperators are the first ones responsible for their own human, Christian, Salesian, and professional formation.

§2. The Association promotes and supports personal and group formation through the action of qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, and other members of the Salesian Family.

### **Art. 30 Fidelity to Commitments Assumed**

§1. With the *Apostolic Promise*, the Salesian Cooperator responds to a Vocation which lasts his or her entire life. He or she expresses it in daily life through witness, the apostolate, and various forms of service. He or she places self at the service of the mission of the Church with availability, living the Salesian charism with authenticity. He or she collaborates with commitment in initiatives that are promoted by other ecclesial, religious, and civic organizations. Each one's fidelity is supported by the affection and solidarity of the other members of the Association and of the Salesian Family.

§2. In order to reinforce the value of belonging to the Association – and through this, to the Salesian Family as a whole – membership commitments assumed with the making of the *Apostolic Promise* are renewed according to those modalities which are most opportune, as established by the *Regulations*.

### **Art. 31 Leaving the Association**

§1. The Salesian Cooperator who, through personal choice, intends to cease to be part of the Association will communicate this to the Local Council with a written declaration. The Local Council will send a copy of the declaration to the Provincial Council.

§2. The decision to dismiss one of its members from the Association for grave reasons, must be taken by the Provincial Council, at the justified request of the Local Council, in the spirit of charity and of clarity, after having verified a lifestyle which is incoherent with the fundamental duties expressed in the *Project of Apostolic Life*. This decision shall be communicated to the interested party in writing.

### **Art. 32 Meaning and Formula of the Apostolic Promise**

§1. The meaning and purpose of the *Promise* is to express the Aspirant's will to live his or her Baptism according to the *Project of Apostolic Life*. Don Bosco himself proposed the *Promise* as an apostolic expression of the Salesian Vocation in society.

§2. The *Promise*<sup>37</sup>

*“O Father, I adore You because You are good and love everyone.  
I thank You for having created and redeemed me,  
and for having called me to become part  
of Your Church  
and for having me come to know in her  
the apostolic Family of Don Bosco,  
which lives for You at the service of the young  
and of ordinary folk.*

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<sup>37</sup>The present formula may be adapted according to the differing situations, as long as the contents are respected. When the *Promise* is renewed, say: “I renew the promise to...”



*Drawn by Your merciful Love,  
I wish to love You in return by doing good.*

*For this reason,*

*I PROMISE*

*to live out the Project of Apostolic Life of the Association of Salesian Cooperators with commitment (as a Priest). That is:*

- *to be a faithful disciple of Christ in the Catholic Church;*
- *to work in Your Kingdom, especially for the advancement and salvation of the young;*
- *to deepen and give witness to the Salesian spirit;*
- *to collaborate, in Family communion, in the apostolic initiatives of the local Church.*

*Give me, O Father, the strength of Your Spirit,  
so that I might know how to be a faithful witness  
to these commitments.*

*May Mary, Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, assist me and guide me in this life choice. Amen."*

*«According to the gift that each one  
has received, administer it to one another  
as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.»  
(1 Pt. 4:10)*

## **Chap. VI**

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE ASSOCIATION**

#### **Art. 33 The Reasons for This Organization**

Salesian Cooperators, called to live their apostolic Vocation in society and in the Church, have an appropriate organizational structure. The Association of which they are part is the means to live out mission and communion according to this *Project of Apostolic Life*.

#### **Art. 34 Flexible Organization**

Faithful to the will of the Founder, the Association has a flexible and functional structure, established on three levels of government: Local, Provincial, and World.

The efficacy of the Association's action in its area, and its openness to the universality of communion and of mission, are assured through this structure of organization.

#### **Art. 35 Governance and Animation at the Local, Provincial, and World Levels**

With the authority of the Rector Major safeguarded, and represented normally by his Vicar, or by a delegate named by him, the governance and animation of the Association is entrusted to its own Local, Provincial, and World Councils, which also include the presence of Religious members nominated by their respective SDB or FMA Provincial for the Local and Provincial Councils, and by the Rector Major for the World Council. Legal representation of the Association is entrusted to the Coordinator of the respective Council.

#### **Art. 36 The Local Level**

§1. The fundamental nucleus of the Association is the Local Center. Ordinarily, it gathers together Salesian Cooperators who work within a specific territory. Every Center has a Delegate appointed by his or her respective Provincial. The Center is preferably established near a Salesian work – either of the Salesians of Don Bosco or of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

§2. The Local Centers are directed collegially by a Local Council which is elected by all the members comprising the Assembly of the Local Center. The Council elects from among its members a Local Coordinator and defines the specific roles of the Councilors. The Delegate is part of the Council and has an active voice.

§3. Men and women of good will, even if of a different Christian Confession, or of a different religion, and/or culture, who feel an affinity with the Salesian charism, can share in the initiatives of the Local Center and offer their collaboration as “Friends of Don Bosco.”

### **Art. 37 The Provincial Level**

§1. Local Centers are organized into Provinces established by the Rector Major, subject to a proposal by the World Council.

§2. In consideration of the “bond of union” and of the charismatic ties among the Association of Salesian Cooperators and the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Association’s Provinces are related to the reality of the respective SDB or FMA Provinces.

§3. Every Province has a Provincial Council elected by the Local Councils *in sede* at the Provincial Congress according to the modalities foreseen in the Regulations of the Congress.

§4. The Provincial Council is organized collegially, electing a Provincial Coordinator from among its Council members. The Council itself defines the specific tasks of each of the Councilors. Every Provincial Council has an SDB and an FMA Delegate among its Councilors. These have an active voice and are named by the respective SDB and FMA Provincials.

§5. For the animation of the Association, the Provinces, with respect for the autonomy of their governance, are organized into Regions according to affinity of language, culture, and territory, by the decision of the Rector Major, with the agreement of the World Council. The SDB and FMA Provincials concerned, in common accord, name one SDB Regional Delegate and one FMA Regional Delegate.

### **Art. 38 The World Level**

§1. The World Council is composed of:

- the World Coordinator, named directly by the Rector Major;
- the SDB World Delegate, named by the Rector Major, and the FMA World Delegate, named by the Rector Major on the proposal of the Mother General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians;
- the World Councilors, elected by the respective Regional Congresses;
- the World Treasurer and World Secretary, elected – by secret ballot – by the Councilors themselves.

§2. The World Executive Secretary (SEM) is composed of the World Coordinator, the World Treasurer, the World Secretary, the SDB World Delegate, and the FMA World Delegate.

The SEM has the function of seeing to the ordinary acts of administration which do not require the convocation of the World Council. Within the World Council, it assumes the task of “Council for Economic Affairs” within the Association according to the terms of Canon 1280.

§3. The term of office for members of the World Council is six years.

§4. The directives of the World Council come into force upon the approval of the Rector Major.

### **Art. 39 The Administration of the Goods of the Association**

§1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators, in that it is a public ecclesiastical juridical person, has the ability to acquire, possess, administer, and alienate temporal goods, according to the norms of the Law. The goods owned by the Association as such are ecclesiastical goods.<sup>38</sup>

§2. The Rector Major, with the World Council, administers the goods of the Association at the World level and is the competent authority in granting to the Local and Provincial Councils the permissions needed to establish acts of ordinary administration and alienation which do not require the intervention of the Apostolic See.<sup>39</sup>

§3. The Councils, through a Treasurer chosen from within the Council, care for the management of the goods of the Association. The Treasurer also prepares the “Statement of Cash Flow” to present annually to the Council of the next higher level.

### **Art. 40 Final Dispositions**

§1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is erected by the present *Statutes*. Other norms are contained in the *Regulations* at the World level, or in the Handbooks at the various levels.

- The *Statutes* define the apostolic Vocation of the Salesian Cooperator: his or her identity, spirit, mission, and communion, and the principles of the organizational structure of the Association.
- The *Regulations* contain those practical points which specify and regulate its action, methodology, structure, and organization. It renders concrete the principles of the *Statutes*, to which it is subordinate, so they may be lived out in a practical manner.
- The *Handbooks* (formerly called *Directories*) list those particular dispositions of the Association to adapt the *Project of Apostolic Life* to the concrete functioning in the diverse territorial realities. They are approved by the respective Councils and ratified by the Councils of the immediate higher level, who must guarantee that the dispositions conform to the *Statutes* and the *Regulations*.

§2. The present *Statutes* can be modified at the proposal of the Supreme Moderator, of the World Council, or of the Provincial Councils. The proposed modification must include a clear and detailed presentation of the motives which justify said modification, must define the concrete objectives which follow from it, and the principles on which it is articulated. It pertains to the Superior of the Association to evaluate and accept the proposed modification.

The process of modification will be defined by the World Council with the consent of the Rector Major.

The modification must be approved subsequently by an absolute majority from among the participants at the World Congress, by the Superior of the Association, and by the Apostolic See.

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<sup>38</sup>*Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition.* Canons 1255 and 1257 §1.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.* Can. 1292 § 2.

## CONCLUSION

### Art. 41 A Way to Sanctity

Salesian Cooperators choose to share the Gospel way traced out by the present *Project of Apostolic Life*.

They commit themselves in a responsible manner to this way which brings one to sanctity: the Association of the Cooperators “is designed to shake many Christians from the languor in which they lie, and to spread the energy of charity.”<sup>40</sup>

The Lord accompanies with the abundance of His grace all those who work in the spirit of the “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*,” doing good to youth and to ordinary folk.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Eugenio Ceria, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Trans. Vincent Zuliani, SDB. Vol. XVIII. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 2003). 125. Print.

<sup>41</sup>*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way...* Introduction.