



Congress of the Inter-American Region

During the last meeting of the World Council held in March 2021 we decided that this year we would not have an elective Regional Congresses and I asked to take this moment of associative life to plan a Regional Formation and Examination Congress of the six-year term which ended. Thank you for accepting this invitation and for organizing this Congress.

I want to take a short journey with you, looking at our past history and updating the present, with an eye on the future.

Already 145 years have passed since May 9, 1876, the date marking the founding of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. We read in the Preface of the Project of Apostolic Life:

“From the very start, Don Bosco thought of 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 of life in the “Regulations for the Salesian Cooperators” which himself wrote and which were then approved by the Church. Today, Salesian Cooperators are spread throughout the world and work at that level.

Our Father Don Bosco considered us as Salesians capable of carrying out his own mission, for the salvation of young people, outside of works, in the secular world, according to their own conditions of life.

For 145 years, we have embodied the “Church on the way” that Pope Francis constantly asks us to be.

Let's remember

During all these years, the Association has changed because the times it has been through have been different.

But the event which marked the real turning point of our Association was the Second Vatican Council, during which the laity assumed a leading role in the life of the Church.

In the mid-1970s a process of renewal began which led, in 1986, to the approval of the Regulations for Apostolic Life (RVA), keeping the Association firmly anchored to the original idea of Don Bosco, but moving forward with the challenges of the society of those years.



In 2012, during the Fourth World Congress, after a work of study, discernment and prophecy, the official text to be presented to the Holy See was approved, which in 2013 definitively approved the Project of Apostolic Life (PVA) of the 'Association of Salesian Cooperators, which carries within itself two substantial innovations that characterize our association in these first twenty years of the twenty-first century.

The first: no longer just Cooperators but "Salesian Cooperators", which, as has been said several times, is not only a lexical change but above all a fundamental change, the vocational particularity of being Salesians is highlighted, therefore to be co-responsible in the mission and guardians of the Salesian charism in its lay expression, in communion with the whole Salesian Family.

The second: it is a "Project of Life", not a set of norms but a guide to keep the whole Association in the path traced by Don Bosco 145 years ago, offering the Salesian Cooperators a point of reference for to draw the ever new sap for his life and mission as Salesians.

During these years we have grown in number and presence in the world. We are currently more than 30,000 and are present in 102 countries, but, no less important, the awareness of our vocation as responsible lay people in the Church, capable of carrying out specific and significant pastoral action has grown.

Looking to the future Looking to today

But back to recent history.

The V World Congress in October 2018 marks the start of the PVA update and gives us the lines of commitment for the sexennium 2018-2024:

- THE PRIORITY CHALLENGE

- "Walking with young people towards a new, more Christian and humane society which is often marked by the lack of meaning in life, of human dignity, by family crises, socio-economic situations and new technologies."

- THE DREAM TO GROW

To be credible and joyful witnesses of our vocation, carrying out projects of life, faith, hope and care for the environment with and for young people to meet their expectations.

- KEY FACTORS

- Communion in diversity as a path to holiness

- Shared mission as a vocational proposal with and for young people



o Integral formation in the three dimensions, Human, Christian, Salesian and in the four pillars and shared with the Salesian Family

o Solidarity and autonomy in co-responsibility

● ESSENTIAL VALUES

Fidelity to the Apostolic promise

o Sense of belonging to the Church, to the Association and to the Salesian Family

* Family spirit

o Shared responsibility

● CONVERSION PROCESS

Ensure a deep spirituality to reach out to young people, listen to them and accompany them

Internalize the PVA to discern and revitalize our relationship between being and doing with prophetic zeal and passion

o Get out of your “comfort zone” to be dynamic and credible witnesses of our vocation and touch young people in their realities.

To be a community of reference for young people with concrete proposals.

We will not go into details as they have been widely disclosed by the World Councilors in their regions, but what I am asking you today is to always have them as a point of reference in planning the Region.

These lines of engagement are more relevant than ever for the new changes that contemporary society has undergone as a result of this health emergency.

But these challenges will also represent growth opportunities for each one from a personal point of view and for the whole Association, insofar as we will be able to revive the network of relations which have “slept” in this period.

We will have to share experiences, raise awareness that the Association has, in addition to the local Center, a provincial, regional, global scope to give peace of mind, confidence and increase the feeling of belonging.

It is time to reflect on a new profile of the Salesian Cooperator.



We cannot fail to take into account that these times strongly influence our personal, professional, family and associative life.

I imagine a Salesian Cooperator more attentive to the common good, present and committed in the social field, with particular attention to the poor, to families and to young people. Who reappropriates the specificity of the Salesian educator. He becomes a bearer of enthusiasm and vitality in the Church, growing in the awareness of belonging to a charismatic Family.

We must not wait for the end of the health emergency to activate these processes.

We must be protagonists in the construction of "Social Friendship" that Pope Francis, in the Encyclical Letter "All Brothers", indicates to us as an objective if we want to live in a world more attentive to the needs of others.

The Association of Salesian Cooperators in the world, in 2020, thanks to the Rosario Maiorano Project, has worked in terms of economic solidarity, taking care of those who are in need in these difficult times, investing around 40,000 €.

By realizing being a "Samaritan" from situations of real need, by privileging the areas of our mission.

Many have taken action by exploiting new communication technologies to keep alive relationships with the greatest number of Salesian Cooperators.

These are the first signs that a NEW SPRING has already started for the Association of Salesian Cooperators and for the whole Salesian Family.

- Let us free all our Salesian creativity.
- Let us become Leaders by activating processes of inclusive relationships that enhance all Salesian Cooperators and other Groups of the Salesian Family who are close to us.
- Let us educate in economic solidarity as an instrument of personal growth which strengthens our feeling of belonging.
- Let us take care of the people, the older Salesian Cooperators, those who have moved away for various reasons.

A change of epoch is taking place all over the world. Let us not be afraid of sudden changes, but live this time as protagonists, sowing hope.

Good Congress

Antonio Boccia

World Coordinator

Association of Salesian Cooperators