

THE ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

GUIDELINES AND INDICATIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS



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PREFACE

The vocation to be a Salesian Cooperator is an invitation to put oneself on the path of developing one's Christian life as a baptized person. Such a life is at one and the same time a *gift* and a *commitment*. It is a *gift* because each one of us receives from God a personal invitation to realize him or herself by putting one's very life at the service of the Kingdom. But it is also a *commitment* and a responsibility because God does not act without the consent of the person; it is a call to open oneself and to cooperate with the transforming action of God in such a way that the entirety of one's very life is guided by the Holy Spirit.

For the Salesian Cooperator, this "opening oneself up to cooperating" means making the Gospel values described in the *Project of Apostolic Life* a reality in one's own life. One becomes a true Salesian Cooperator when such values, which are characteristic of the good Christian and the honest citizen, shape one's mentality, one's underlying motivations, one's attitudes, and one's behaviors – when, in summary, that ideal identity described in the *Project of Apostolic Life* becomes one's own identity, lived in humble sincerity. Such a vocation is original in its characteristic traits, rich in its content, and exigent in its demands.

The call of the Lord to be a Salesian Cooperator, however, does not imply that one possess, right from the start and in a mature manner, all the characteristics which it entails; nor does it mean that one is living fully and coherently all the implications which it carries with it. In order to respond thus to this call, a solid formation, in every case, is necessary.

But why a new document?

After Vatican Council II, all Associations were invited to rediscover the original inspiration of their Charism; and thus there began, also for the Association of the Salesian Cooperators, a path of renewal which, after a series of stages, culminated in the approval of our new *Project of Apostolic Life*.

Moreover, the inherent demands of a valid Christian commitment in our present world have brought the ecclesial Groups and Movements to insist, much more than in the past, on the importance of a solid formation and on the necessity for the apostle to keep himself updated and open to growth and change. The present culture, in fact, constantly launches new questions and challenges. The Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, offers ever new calls to action in doctrine, pastoral practice, and the spiritual life. The lives of all men and women pass through different phases with ever-changing problems and opportunities; therefore, no one can ever consider himself or herself completely formed. Formation is an ongoing process of renewal.

These *General Principles* and their related *Indicated Actions* have, therefore, one goal: to bring the

Salesian Cooperator to understand the richness of this vocation so as to help him or her respond to the challenges which the world, and particularly the young, place before the Christian faith and the Salesian mission. Such principles constitute, moreover, an important point of reference for all those who have responsibility for formation in the Association.

To be able to reach these objectives, an adequate human maturity and a healthy cultural openness (*human dimension*), a deepening of one's faith (*Christian dimension*), and the educational and apostolic choice in the spirit of Don Bosco (*Salesian dimension*) are necessary. These three dimensions constitute the structural framework upon which this new document is built, ever in keeping with what is indicated in *Christifideles Laici*.

Each one of us must be firm in the conviction that today the task of an adequate formation is indispensable for the good of the person, for the future of the Association, and for its impact on our apostolic action; this will be significant only if it is upheld by one's witness and illuminated by proper motivations.

The *World Coordinator* Mrs. Noemi Bertola
and the *World Council* of the Association of Salesian Cooperators

INTRODUCTION

These *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of the Salesian Cooperators* are meant for the entire Association, and, in particular, for those who are in leadership (the members of the Councils and the Formators). They seek to offer principles, criteria, indications, and essential guidelines which will permit the planning of formative journeys which are appropriate for the different socio-cultural, territorial, and ecclesial situations, while preserving, at the same time, the need for a unified set of guidelines.

This document draws its inspiration from the formative model which is most consistent with the present developments in the science of formation and has, therefore, a general character which must always be kept in mind when developing annual or long-range plans and programs for initial or ongoing formation.

The point of departure for this task consists in answering the question: *What kind of Salesian Cooperator do we wish to form?*

The only possible answer is contained in the *Project of Apostolic Life* for it traces out the identity of the Cooperator.

What is "Formation"?

Formation is the result of the commitment and the efforts of a person who, also with the aid of other people, seeks to develop all the dimensions of his being in a harmonious manner and to cultivate and to bring to fruition his personal abilities and gifts. Moreover, all those things within a man and a woman which work to develop, to foster the growth of, and to mature his or her own potentialities have formative value.

A process which is not merely intellectual

Formation is far more than just theoretical learning; this vast process of maturation which concerns the entire person is nourished by research, searching, and reflection; it is strengthened and fortified by prayer and commitment, in dialogue with God and in the fulfillment of one's apostolic responsibilities. It is also enriched and verified through dialogue and checking with other persons.

The formation of the Salesian Cooperator, in particular, joins study and practical commitment, as in the best Salesian tradition. Don Bosco was always wary of a formation that was too theoretical – which wasn't measured against real life. He used to propose reflections which were able to illuminate praxis and a praxis which motivated reflection, always with a view to an action which was more in touch with reality and more apostolically efficacious: his was a sense of the concrete, the real – a characteristic trait of his spirit.

A gradual and unified process

Formation is a gradual and unified process inasmuch as the various dimensions of one's life and one's potential are developed and mature progressively and simultaneously. Further, it is unified through the formation of one's conscience, which orients and gives meaning to the development of one's personal abilities.

A conscience illuminated by the Word of God

The Salesian Cooperator has Christ for his Teacher: therefore, he strives to conform his life to that of Christ. This formation is “a continual process in the individual of maturation in faith and a likening to Christ, according to the will of the Father, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”¹

¹John Paul II. *Christifideles Laici*. Par. 57. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 3 Dec. 2015. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html

A plan of life

In traveling along this path of configuration to Christ, one is called to develop his or her personal plan of life enlightened by the faith experience of other men and women; of persons who, in a manner all their own, have already happily succeeded in their *sequela Christi*: the Saints. The Saints offer us all concrete, lived examples and, therefore, they point out to us secure paths of faith and of Christian commitment. In a particular way, the Salesian Cooperators refer to and are inspired by the faith experience and apostolic commitment lived and witnessed to by St. John Bosco.² Thus, they take on those same Gospel values as their own personal plan of life with the same inspirations that Don Bosco realized in his.

Complementarity between self-formation and formation within the Association

From what has been said, one easily deduces that a Salesian Cooperator's self-formation is, before all else, a personal responsibility.³ There is no doubt, however, that this process of formation is supported by the formation initiatives fostered by the Association on behalf of its members.⁴

Personal formation

The term "personal formation" or "self-formation" means the life-long commitment and effort to achieve human maturity, growth in one's faith life, and growth in fidelity to the Salesian charism and mission which the Salesian Cooperator carries forward by his or her own initiative – whether this be during the phase of preparation for entrance into the Association or after official entrance with the making of the Promise.

The fundamental prerequisite for a path of personal formation is the interior attitude of striving to grow in taking on one's tasks and responsibilities as a joyous gift of self and in a relationship with the Lord. Without this attitude, formation remains superficial for it is not rooted and does not give significant fruit. It is not to be reduced, in fact, to what is received from the outside; it becomes real through one's maturation on the inside. This requires openness to listening to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit who speaks to the heart of man.

The "place" of formation

Where does one's personal formation take place? It takes place, as one has understood from what has been said, within each person's very being. This presupposes a gradual and continuous process which helps one mature from his or her initial attraction to the Salesian Cooperator vocation to an informed acceptance of it and, finally, to an ever more vital adherence to those specific human, Christian, and Salesian values proper to one's identity. Naturally, so that one's life become an authentic place of formation, it is necessary that one's own experiences be transformed into a true proving ground of one's personal formative commitment.

Formation within the Association

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.

²See Association of Salesian Cooperators. *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Trans. Denise Ann Sickinger, FMA. Statutes, Article 6. (Madrid: Advantia Comunicación Gráfica S.A., 2013) 27. Print.

³See *ibid.* Article 29 §1. 48.

⁴See *ibid.* Article 29 §2. 48.

The principal criteria of formation

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 identity⁵;
- *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, this document, *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of the Salesian Cooperators*, is divided into five chapters. In the first, the topic of “dimensions” and “pillars” of formation is tackled. These are reference points and fundamental concepts traversing the entire document for, in substance, 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. This first chapter, besides listing the *General Principles*, seeks to suggest some *Indicated Actions* which will render it easier to plan individual formative initiatives.

The second chapter focuses on the most characteristic moments (gathering, meetings, encounters and initiatives) and tools at one’s disposition for the formative experience, as well as on those human and spiritual resources which can support and help to render formation efficacious.

The third chapter, which examines the different *phases of formation*, seeks to apply the *General Principles* listed in the first chapter to the *initial* and *ongoing* formation of the Salesian Cooperator. It speaks, in particular, of the modalities with which the process of initial formation can be brought to completion for the person who wishes to become part of the Association and also of the way to accompany someone in living out fidelity to the commitments taken along the entire path of his or her life.

⁵See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 3 §1. 25.

The fourth chapter, entitled, "Formation to the Service of Responsibility in Animation and Governance," seeks to indicate those guidelines and objectives necessary to launch formation for those in leadership in the Association by highlighting the necessary motivations and points that need attention.

Finally, the last part proposes some guidelines and indicated actions concerning *the formation of the Formators*.

These new *Guidelines* must become the point of reference in the area of formation of the Salesian Cooperator, with the goal of guaranteeing a holistic growth of the person and of his or her sense of belonging to the Association.

For this reason, the Association encourages reflection on and putting into action these formative guidelines at all levels. Formation is the fundamental key to sustaining fidelity to one's vocation and to foster *change* so as to open up vast and creative horizons in every Salesian Cooperator and, consequently, in the Association itself.

The task here described is not an easy one but is possible. Success in undertaking the formative process by each person – both individually and in co-responsibility with others – means making the great dream of Don Bosco come true – the one in which the Salesian Cooperator becomes a true *Salesian in the world*.

CHAPTER 1. DIMENSIONS AND PILLARS

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*.⁶

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 16 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.⁷

⁶This last *pillar* was added to the classic triad (*To Know, To Know How to Do, To Know How to Be*) beginning in 1996, 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.

⁷*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 16 §1. 80-81.

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.

HUMAN DIMENSION <i>To Know</i>	CHRISTIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know</i>	SALESIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know</i>
HUMAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Do</i>	CHRISTIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Do</i>	SALESIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Do</i>
HUMAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Be</i>	CHRISTIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Be</i>	SALESIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Be</i>
HUMAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Live in Communion</i>	CHRISTIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Live in Communion</i>	SALESIAN DIMENSION <i>To Know How to Live in Communion</i>

Information concerning the topics listed in these 12 squares (four *pillars* for each of the three *dimensions*) will be presented in the following manner: the discussion will begin with the theoretical premises (*General Principles*) and will be followed by some *Indicated Actions*, the purpose of which are to render the planning of individual formative initiatives easier at all levels.

1.1 HUMAN DIMENSION

The growth of persons is a fundamental value of every human society. This can be considered as a *transformation*, a *progressive maturation*, a process of *personalization*, of *autonomy*, and of *openness* – in a word, a process of *humanization* and of *integration into society*.

A person must be understood within the complexity of his interwoven corporeal, psychological, and spiritual aspects as well as the human environment which surrounds him or her.

The following are fundamental points concerning any man or woman engaged in a process of development and must be taken into consideration to accompany that growth:

- *the uniqueness of the person*. There are realities and elements which are common to all human beings, but personality and one's subjective life are unique to each person;
- *the concept of a dynamic and evolving person*. This is a key point. Every person has the ability to modify himself for his entire life. The desire to exist, moved by a dynamism of growth, pushes him incessantly to better himself, to use his potential, to free himself from personal "blocks", and to seek a fullness of life. The psychological health of a human being is possible only in forward movement, through continuous change. Equilibrium and harmony can never be considered as acquired once and for all for they will always be the object of a search which takes into consideration the evolution of the person and of the environment;
- *the relational and social dimension of a person*. Human beings, by their nature, are not self-sufficient, but are made for relationship, for exchange, and for communication; they aspire to give and need to receive. Their *humanization* and their growth take place thanks to relationships;

– *the desire to love and the need to be loved*. Satisfaction of this desire and of this need shapes one’s development, colors one’s actions, thoughts, and relationships, and plays a role in in one’s humanization and giving meaning to one’s life. The Salesian Cooperator who cares for his own formation and for the formation of others, especially of the young, cannot ignore the centrality of the affective sphere and its dynamics;

– *openness to the Transcendent One*. In the depths of every human being, one can perceive an openness to a transcendence; that is, to a greater reality – infinite and, at the same time, immanent. For the Salesian Cooperators, this reality takes on the name of God and the face of Jesus who give the Holy Spirit.

1.1.1. TO KNOW

General Principles

The importance of this first pillar of human formation of the Salesian Cooperator springs, before all else, from their integration in temporal realities.

The *Project of Apostolic Life* states: “Salesian Cooperators know they are ‘in intimate solidarity’ with the society in which they live and *for which they are called to be light, salt, and leaven*”⁸ and “integrate into their life ‘all that which is good.’”⁹

The import of these few statements is enormous and shocking; it follows from them that:

- the society in which one lives and works is *the place of one's vocation*. The *apostolic Promise* is the response to a call which is incarnated in each particular context; and
- nothing which has to do with man is extraneous to Christian life.

Salesian lay Cooperators, in particular, “carry out their apostolic commitment and live the Salesian spirit, with lay characteristics and sensitivities, in the ordinary situations of life and of work,”¹⁰ so that their success in being *credible* witnesses of the Gospel in the world necessarily passes also from attention to the knowledge of man. Consequently, they “develop their own human gifts, so that they might fulfill ever better their family, professional, and civic responsibilities.”¹¹ This indicates to the lay Salesian Cooperator precise priorities where the study and the deepening of one's own human formation are concerned.

It follows, then, that: “[c]onscious of the importance of on-going formation, the Salesian Cooperators ... dedicate time to reflection and study.”¹²

Moreover, they are called to know contemporary culture so as to be able to announce, in an efficacious way, *the good news of the Gospel*. “The Association – in fact – intervenes courageously... to promote a sociopolitical culture inspired by the Gospel and to defend human and Christian values.”¹³ This requires: the acquisition of a good understanding of the social and cultural phenomena of one’s own times, accurate information, and knowledge of the realities at work in one’s area, and, particularly, in the sphere of education.

⁸*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 16 §1. 37.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. Article 3 §2. 25.

¹¹Ibid. Regulations, Article 16 §1. 80.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid. Article 3 §2. 65.

Indicated Actions

It is important, from the point of view of being human, to:

- recognize and analyze all topics and issues concerning the family and education;
- emphasize the importance of continual updating regarding professional ethics, and the different events, facts, and situations in the world¹⁴;
- know the different phases of human growth for a greater understanding of one's own maturation and that of those who are the intended recipients of our apostolic action;
- know the world of youth and their issues;
- deepen one's knowledge concerning topics that deal with the culture, social communications, ethics, and the safeguarding of human life;
- know the issues concerning the world of work, the world of science, the economy, ecology, living in society, human rights, justice, solidarity, and peace;
- know the results of surveys and polls which help one understand better the needs of one's area, and, in a particular way, of those living on the geographic or existential fringes;
- know how to recognize the characteristics of the postmodern era;
- make our ethical response more profound where problems concerning the safeguarding of human life, abortion, euthanasia, and genetics are concerned; and
- analyze some themes which relate to other ethical and social topics, such as: immigration, respect for the environment, and globalization.

1.1.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

General Principles

All *knowledge* or *learning* acquired is not an end itself, and neither is it a title of honor, but it has as its goal a *competence* which helps the Salesian Cooperators in the carrying out of an *apostolate* through the realization of the *task* which has been entrusted to them. “[a]ttentive to the signs of the times... they continue God's creative work and give witness to Christ with integrity, hard work, and coherence of life; through the educative mission and serious, up-dated professionalism...”¹⁵

They are, therefore, called to cultivate and to develop their unique human and professional abilities to fulfill the responsibilities of their workplace job in the light of a coherent ethic of Christian values. It is important, especially in the area of self-formation, to avoid both extremes – either overvaluing or undervaluing one's own abilities; it is a matter of considering one's personal job or profession as a service to others and as a means to contribute to the good of society.

Some specific abilities, when viewed from this perspective, are specially useful to everyone – even to those who are not working presently or who do not have a particular profession; among them one can make reference, in particular, to the use of the means and the technologies of communication, at a level proportionate to one's personal skills and needs. The Association, in fact, “commits itself to utilize the many means of social communication and the new technologies to collaborate in cultural dialogue, to foster the development of their critical capacity, and to elaborate and spread formative publications accessible in various ways to all.”¹⁶ This apostolate is absolutely necessary if the Association is to remain faithful to Don Bosco who committed himself to the task of spreading *good literature*, always in the avant-

¹⁴See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 16 §1. 37.

¹⁵Ibid. Regulations, Article 2 §1. 64.

¹⁶Ibid. Article 16 §4. 81-82.

garde in respect to his times. The taste and the desire for research, creativity, and the spirit of initiative must be put at the service of the world today and, when needed, with a critical sense and with the desire to make one's voice heard.

The Salesian Cooperators “work with commitment to spread a Christian culture and ethic of welcome and solidarity in society.”¹⁷ This attitude takes on particular importance in relationship to the dynamics of belonging to the civic community for the purpose of being the ones in the forefront of renewal. Active participation in public life is the most immediate consequence of being *honest citizens*. The construction of a just social order, through which each one receives what is owed him, is a fundamental task which every generation must confront anew.

In order to be incisive and significant in our society, one must acquire and develop some skills and basic competencies.

Indicated Actions

It is necessary to:

- develop one's own gifts and human and job-related skills and abilities and to make oneself ever more qualified from a professional standpoint;
- use and develop all those skills and abilities which may render one's own personal apostolic experience and social commitment more efficacious;
- acquire diverse skills in the use of the means and the technologies of communication, at a level proportionate to one's individual abilities and needs;
- learn to work with a planning mentality so as to devise a Plan of Life for oneself, for the reality of one's Center, and for the Association, thus rendering even our own apostolic action more incisive and efficacious;
- plan initiatives and group dynamics which enable each one to discover his or her own gifts and the virtues of their companions on the journey, thus leading all to reciprocal esteem; and
- develop and put into practice means and techniques which will help with interpersonal relationships.

1.1.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

General Principles

Before all else, personal growth is the development of one's being in all of one's different dimensions: identity, values, motivations, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships with others and with God. An authentic formation of one's personality requires an adequate growth in being, that is, in identity. All the other points and pillars of formation are important inasmuch as they are at the service of the realization of said *identity*.

The role that being plays in the growth of a person is above all a role which might be defined as the “motor”; i.e., arising from the deepest place in oneself, it is what moves one to be determined to make progress and pushes one on towards “being more” – towards maturity. Some profound motivations nudge this determination to assert itself and to push back the limits fixed by others or by oneself. *Being* also has a directive role, in the sense that it marks out a direction or a road, in function of that which is in harmony with it and which contributes to its realization, by means of processing insights or, sometimes, of imperatives, or of actions to take. The decisions and the actions which follow this road contribute in making a person grow in a harmonious way.

¹⁷*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 16 §2. 38.

Thus, the Salesian Cooperator can reach, in a *conscious* way, a dynamic and trusting understanding of himself and, at the same time, a constructive welcoming of others.

The ultimate goal of this pillar of formation is *human maturity* in all its dimensions (intellectual, psychological, affective, social, moral, relational, spiritual...).

The underlying attitude which must characterize the human maturity of the Salesian Cooperator is *openness to change*. This can be reduced to two fundamental areas: self-formation and the propensity to better oneself. Salesian Cooperators must be open to better their own character by becoming aware of their own limits and proposing for themselves goals of gradual and attainable growth. Character, in fact, is not something that is immutable; it can be improved by becoming conscious of one's personal defects, by exercising patience in overcoming them, and by acting according to proper motivations (to be a "good gift" for our fellow travelers).

Indicated Actions

It is indispensable to:

- open oneself to the highest *values*, such as respect for justice, sincerity, goodness, firmness of mind and soul, loyalty, and coherence of life;
- develop some fundamental *attitudes* which express the centrality of the human person, of his choices, and of his most fundamental choice;
- value all the possibilities for the development of the inclination to know oneself and to verify the authenticity of one's *motivations*;
- encourage and cultivate generosity and availability in giving of oneself and of *going beyond oneself*, such as the capacity to put at the center of one's "solar system" the needs of others;
- educate and be educated to the sense of fatherhood/motherhood, especially spiritual fatherhood or motherhood;
- ensure growth in affective equilibrium and in the courage and the ability to make lasting and stable choices;
- grow in one's civic sense so as to have greater and more meaningful visibility which develops in the light of the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church;
- know how to be *open to change*, capable of *facing up to the new situations* which society and the Church present; and
- gradually assume the inclination to self-formation and to care for oneself.

1.1.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

General Principles

From the moment in which the response to the call to be a Salesian Cooperator carries with it an active belonging to the ecclesial community, to the Association, and – for the laity – to the realities and civic community in which they live, it is fundamental to grow in certain aspects which concern the ability to live and to work together with others.

This attitude of maintaining good relationships, in fact, is not only the fruit of a personal temperament, which is more or less sociable, but can be developed and increased through the constant effort of being open and of overcoming one's interior conditionings. One must become able to sympathize with others and to develop an attitude which seeks to create a favorable affective atmosphere characterized by human warmth. This can be achieved little by little.

Salesian Cooperators *live and give witness to* “a firm will to be a builder of peace in a world agitated by violence and class hatred,”¹⁸ by which they “are peace workers and seek clarification, consensus, and accord in and through dialogue.”¹⁹ This commits them to a journey which goes from the ability to *resolve conflicts*, to discussion, collaboration, reciprocal esteem, the ability to work together, and all the way to *friendship*.

As to what concerns the ability to work together, the Salesian Cooperator matures the conviction that this aptitude is essential for the carrying out of the mission; therefore, he *wishes* to be capable of working together with others.

Indicated Actions

It is fundamental to:

- grow in a spirit of peace, harmony, and concord, and in the inclination to live love in an authentic manner;
- develop a sense of and a profound understanding of the meaning of *friendship*;
- increase one's ability to relate by becoming gradually aware of one's closed-mindedness and egocentric attitudes;
- welcome and appreciate other people's thoughts and reasoning, maturing attitudes of openness and trust, of reciprocal esteem, and of growth in the ability to *resolve conflicts* and to have constructive discussions;
- know how to experience the joy of working together;
- identify those dynamics which help one better one's character and become aware of one's personal defects so as to propose goals of gradual and attainable growth for oneself; and
- participate actively in the life of the civic community to which one belongs.

1.2. CHRISTIAN DIMENSION

The Salesian Cooperators find in Christ the foundation, the path, and the goal of one's own being, of one's own call, and, within the vocational dynamic, of one's own apostolic mission in the Church.

They “follow Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, sent by the Father to serve the people of the world”²⁰ and, because of this, 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,”²¹ following in a responsible manner that way which leads to sanctity.²² Therefore, in order to render the many traits of the rich Christian identity more authentic and to fulfill the commitments of their apostolic mission, they need to configure themselves to Christ, “convinced that they can do nothing if they are not in union with Jesus Christ.”²³

¹⁸*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 7. 30.

¹⁹*Ibid.* Article 18. 39.

²⁰*Ibid.* Article 8 §1. 30.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²See *ibid.* Article 41. 60.

²³*Ibid.* Article 19 §1. 39.

See Jn. 15:5.

Vatican Council II. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. Par. 4. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 3 Dec. 2015. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html

Within the heart of the Salesian Cooperator resounds strongly the Pauline call to divest oneself of the old man and to clothe oneself with the new man. “For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son: that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren.”²⁴ By virtue of his *Promise*, the Salesian Cooperator commits himself to live his Baptism as a “faithful disciple of Christ” and also “to work in [Your] Kingdom, especially for the advancement and salvation of the young.”²⁵ In Christ, in fact, his life is rooted,²⁶ and only in Him can one recognize the face of God, putting into practice His teachings, and welcoming his Holy Spirit.

In order to live out his own vocation, the Salesian Cooperator feels the need to become a witness to the Beatitudes and to live rooted in Christ for he is aware of the fact that “all baptized people are called to the perfection of love.”²⁷ Consequently, he recognizes that he is called to live and to witness “a life lived according to the Spirit, as the source of joy, peace, and forgiveness,”²⁸ and as “freedom, in obedience to God’s plan.”²⁹

1.2.1. TO KNOW

General Principles

Where formation is concerned, one cannot prescind from helping the Salesian Cooperator acquire a solid *mens Christiana* (“a Christian mentality” – from John Paul II’s Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 37) so as to live as a true disciple of Christ. In Don Bosco’s thought and Salesian tradition, each and every one is called *to know* Revelation and *to live* as good Christians and honest citizens.³⁰

The apostle Paul says to the Christians in Corinth: “For I judged to know nothing among you, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified... And my speech and my preaching were not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of His Spirit and His power.”³¹

This is the true key to Christian wisdom.

Indicated Actions

It is important to:

- recognize that Christian identity is a fundamental trait of one's vocation;
- know the traits and sentiments of Christ and the related demands of the *sequela Christi*;
- know stories and teachings of the Bible through sapiential reading, *Lectio Divina*;
- grow in one's basic theological knowledge, appropriate to the intellectual capacity of each person, paying particular attention to:
 - the teachings of the Holy Father and of the Magisterium of the Church³²;

²⁴Rom. 8:29.
See II Cor. 3:18
Col. 3:5-10.

²⁵*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 32 §2. 51.

²⁶See *ibid.* Regulations, Article 7 §2. 71.

²⁷*Ibid.* Statutes, Article 7. 29.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰See *ibid.* Article 17. 38.

³¹I Cor. 2:2 and 2:4.

³²See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 15 §2. 80.

- the Catechism of the Catholic Church;
- the documents of Vatican Council II;
- the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church;
- and to all that is said in reference to doctrinal formation which is of spiritual and apostolic character, especially in relation to the Sacraments;
- know and mature in those values which are at the base of Christian anthropology; and
- know the path the Church is taking in regard to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

1.2.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

General Principles

The human person is made in the image of God the Creator³³ and was redeemed by Jesus Christ³⁴; this truth carries with it, according to a Christian view of things, a double responsibility:

- that of *building oneself* going forward with joy, in the strength of Baptismal Grace, beginning from that which one already is in Christ in order to grow towards that which, in Him, one can *still* become in fullness³⁵; and
- that of *transforming oneself into the salt of the earth and the light of the world* which shines before men giving fruit of life.³⁶

The Christian, in fact, is a vibrant and dynamic person, ever-changing, challenged by the call of the Master: “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.”³⁷ In the same way, the mandate of Christ “love one another, as I have loved you,”³⁸ raises up in the disciple that creative tension and a “restlessness” which bring about in him the need for an uninterrupted response.

Learning to correspond to gifts received with proper motivations and with readiness – for the purpose of knowing what is, and how to welcome and to live, one's own vocation, gift of the Holy Spirit – is fully a part of the formative task.³⁹

The *Project of Apostolic Life* also comes to our aid here for in it the Salesian Cooperators discover that their vocational response implies:

a specific way of living the Gospel and participating in the mission of the Church... They feel called to live their faith life fully involved in each day's concerns, characterized by two attitudes:

- 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;

³³See Gen. 1:26.

³⁴See Gal. 3:13
Rom. 8:2-3
II Cor. 5:21.

³⁵See Mt. 5:48.

³⁶See Mt. 5:13-16.

³⁷Jn. 15:16.

³⁸Jn. 15:17.

³⁹See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 2 §1. 24.

- 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.⁴⁰

In this way the Salesian Cooperator becomes a faithful disciple of Christ in the measure in which he follows the path towards personal sanctity accompanied by those who have been called to reach that same finish line together with him.

Indicated Actions

It is necessary to:

- discover and develop one's own talents to put them at the service of others;
- harmonize faith and life, knowing and acting, so as to live an incarnated faith;
- give direction to one's own spiritual life through means of the Word of God, the Sacramental life, the liturgy, personal and community prayer⁴¹;
- acquire a lifestyle which is in harmony with the Beatitudes⁴²;
- act as Apostles who are passionate for Christ and builders of His Kingdom⁴³;
- collaborate personally in directing culture to the values of Christian Humanism⁴⁴;
- put into practice, in a concrete and vital way, the experience of discernment as an art of knowing how to recognize the will of God;
- practice spiritual accompaniment of those brothers and sisters in need of help and counsel⁴⁵;
- follow itineraries of education to prayer and to the method of *Lectio Divina*⁴⁶;
- behave as faithful witnesses to Christ and living members of the Church⁴⁷; and
- animate temporal realities with the Gospel spirit of service.

1.2.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

General Principles

The fundamental objective of every Christian life is sanctity. This call, as Vatican Council II reminded us, is put before every believer: “[A]ll the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”⁴⁸

In light of this understanding it is possible to comprehend and to value the last article of the *Statutes* of the *Project of Apostolic Life* and the precious heritage received from Don Bosco:

⁴⁰*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 2 §1. 24.

⁴¹See *ibid.* Regulations, Article 16 §1-2. 80-81.
Ibid. Statutes, Article 13. 35. and 19. 39.

⁴²See *ibid.* Article 7. 29.

⁴³See *ibid.* Article 32 §2. 33.

⁴⁴See *ibid.* Article 15. 37. and Article 16. 37.

⁴⁵See *ibid.* Article 16. 37.; 14 §3. 36; and 15 §2. 37.
Ibid. Regulations, Article 12 §4. 76.

⁴⁶See *ibid.* Article 12 §1.

⁴⁷See *ibid.* Statutes, Article 32 §2.

⁴⁸Vatican Council II. *Lumen Gentium*. Par. 42. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

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.'⁴⁹

Every vocation carries with it a call *to be* even before *to do*. And this is the motive for which Don Bosco, when writing the *Rule of 1876*, stated: "The principal purpose of the Salesian Cooperators is the spiritual good of the members themselves through their embracing a way of life in so far as possible similar to that of Religious living in Community." Therefore, the response to the vocation essentially consists of taking care of one's own spiritual life so as to be a "good gift" to all those whom the Father will send, in conformity with the plan that He has for each one of those whom He called to be *sons in the Son and co-heirs with Christ*.⁵⁰

This Gospel perspective imprints upon formation the character of an authentic *configuration* to Christ and highlights that the reason for it and its purpose are a continuous and fruitful process which tends to help the Salesian Cooperator become the living image of God as a faithful reflection of the Son.

It is Christ who, from the perspective of a life given for love, helps each one understand that to be Christian is not a static reality, but rather one that is dynamic, in continual self-realization. He goes so far as to declare: "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."⁵¹ This command imprints upon the believer an unlimited dynamism of growth marking the pace of an existence in continual evolution, proper to a disciple who can say with Paul: "It is not I who live any longer, but Christ who lives in me."⁵²

Formation in the heart of the Association, ergo, has the goal of helping the Cooperators become:

- men and women who know they are called to sanctity⁵³;
- convinced and committed witnesses of Christ;
- living members of the Church;
- laity capable of animating the world's reality in a Christian way; and
- passionate apostles for the sake of the Kingdom.

Finally, Don Bosco's spirituality is, in its very essence, *Marian*. Mary is a "the noonday Sun" who constantly illumines the personal and apostolic life of the Founder. Salesian Cooperators, following Don Bosco, nurture a filial love for Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church and of humanity.⁵⁴

⁴⁹*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 41. 60.

See Eugenio Ceria, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Ed. and Trans.-in-Chief Vincent Zuliani, SDB. Vol. XVIII. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 2003) 125. Print.

⁵⁰See Rom. 8:17.

⁵¹Mt. 5:48.

⁵²Gal. 2:20.

⁵³See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 17. 41.

⁵⁴See *ibid.* Article 20 §1. 40.

Pascual Chavez, SDB. *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco (Salesian Family Charter)*. Trans. Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. (Rome: Tipografia Vaticana, 2012) 53-55. Print.

Indicated Actions

In the light of article 7 of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, it is essential to:

- interiorize the implications of living according to the Spirit, the wellspring of joy, peace, pardon, and forgiveness so as to take it on as one's own lifestyle;
- live one's freedom in obedience to God's plan, learning to appreciate the value and autonomy proper to secular reality;
- mature a spirit of humility and of service;
- gradually assume an attitude which makes one more determined to administer with sobriety one's personal goods – even considering them an opportunity and a resource in view of the common good;
- live sexuality in harmony with God's plan and the indications of the Church, marked by delicacy and a matrimonial or celibate life lived in integrity and joy and centered on love;
- grow in compassion - as the ability to open one's heart to all the material and moral miseries of the world, making God's care and concern for His people one's own;
- value justice and legality as fundamental elements of one's own Christian witness, recognizing the rights due to all, especially to the weakest;
- be, at all levels, authentic builders of peace in that portion of the Kingdom which God has entrusted to each man and each woman; and
- be aware that it is only in the light of the Faith of the Church that one may understand the Christian identity proper to the Salesian Cooperator and the mysticism of his vocation to sanctity.

1.2.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

General Principles

To know how to live in communion, when considered from the Christian perspective, is a demand which springs from the very reality of being Christians. Relationships receive light from some fundamental principles:

– Every baptized person carries, in the depths of his being, the *mark* of Christ, who wanted to graft his disciples into his Mystical Body - of which He is the Head and the Source of Life.⁵⁵ “Our way is in the Church... The Christian isn't someone who is baptized and then goes his own way... the first fruit of baptism is that you belong to the Church, to the people of God; a Christian without the Church is incomprehensible”⁵⁶; Jesus taught us to lift up our own prayer to God, the Father of all, not only in the singular, but rather as members of the human family: “*Our Father...*”;

– Having been made *co-heirs with Christ*⁵⁷ implies the possibility of sharing and celebrating one faith and one hope so as to form one heart and one soul alone.⁵⁸; and

⁵⁵See Acts 9:1-5.

Rom. 8:17 and 12:3-21.

I Cor. 12:13 and 10:14-17.

Col. 1:15-18.

Eph. 1:22-23 and 5:22-30.

⁵⁶Pope Francis. “No Dichotomy between Christ and the Church.” Homily of Jan. 30, 2014. Web. 3 Dec. 2015. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2014/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20140130_christ-church.html

⁵⁷Rom. 8:16-17.

⁵⁸See Acts 4:32.

– Being members of the body of Christ also carries with it belonging to the Church and participation in its evangelizing mission, as Jesus states in his *sacerdotal prayer*: “That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”⁵⁹

This is the highest revelation of being open to one another, and, therefore, of *knowing how to live in communion*: to immerse oneself into the very intimacy of the Triune God.

Indicated Actions

It is fundamental to:

- live intimacy with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and share this with others, in communion;
- acquire the *sensus Ecclesiae* [feeling and thinking and willing in and with the Church] and the *sentire cum Ecclesia* [feeling one with the Church], freed from “the absurd dichotomy to love Christ without the Church”⁶⁰;
- be concerned about the new evangelization, principally in the mission to the young and to common folk, where responses and ever new forms of proclamation are necessary;
- show oneself solicitous in the promotion and the defense of the “value of the family - the foundational nucleus of society and of the Church”⁶¹ and commit oneself “to construct it as ‘a domestic Church.’”⁶²;
- promote *dialogue* with other Catholic Communities, Associations, and Movements and also ecumenical and interreligious dialogue⁶³;
- develop attitudes of openness, pardon, and welcome.⁶⁴ Christ, in fact, asks that His followers learn how to love everyone, even one’s enemies⁶⁵; and
- practice solidarity, become a volunteer, and be ready to “collaborate, in Family communion, in the apostolic initiatives of the Local Church.”⁶⁶

1.3. SALESIAN DIMENSION

The preface of the *Project of Apostolic Life* states:

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.

⁵⁹Jn. 17:21.

⁶⁰“No Dichotomy between Christ and the Church.”

⁶¹*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 8 §3. 31.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³See *ibid.* Article 11. 34.

Ibid. Regulations, Article 3 §4. 66.

⁶⁴See *ibid.* Statutes, Articles 7. 29-30.; 16 §2. 38.; 18. 38-39.; and 19 §2. 39.

⁶⁵See Mt. 5:43-45.

⁶⁶*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 32 §2. 51.

This specific vocation represents the particular face and the original identity with which the Salesian Cooperators live their human and Christian experience.

Don Bosco did not write a true and veritable treatise of the spiritual life or of his pedagogical system. The Preventive System and the spirituality of our Founder were assimilated through a life shared and a tradition handed down from his first disciples – above all by the example of their witness. Today, however, that first generation of his sons no longer exists. Therefore, in order to be formed as true Salesians, it is necessary, first of all, to make a serious and orderly study of Don Bosco's life, of his writings, of the fountains of his spirituality, of the history of the foundation of the Salesian Family and of the life of its Saints.

As Don Chavez stated, however, “Being familiar with the various aspects of Don Bosco’s life and works and even of his educational method is not sufficient. Behind all this, as the source of the fruitfulness of his activity and relevance, is something that can escape even us, his sons and daughters: his deep inner life, what we could call his ‘familiarity’ with God.”⁶⁷

In seeking to discover this “deepest secret and the real reason for his being so surprisingly relevant today,”⁶⁸ the Salesian Cooperators are called, at the same time, to realize concretely their task of being Salesians. They discover again each day that gift of “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.”⁶⁹

1.3.1. TO KNOW

General Principles

When calling upon each member of the various Religious Institutes, Congregations, and Societies of Apostolic Life to rediscover and value their origins, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes together with the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, in its *Mutuae Relationes* (“Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church”), reaffirm the necessity of an intensive study of the *charism* of the Founders: “The very charism of the Founders”⁷⁰

appears as an “*experience of the Spirit*, transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth... This *distinctive character* also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate, which creates its particular tradition, with the result that one can readily perceive its objective elements.”⁷¹

⁶⁷Chávez, Pascual, SDB. “Let Us Draw upon the Spiritual Experience of Don Bosco in Order to Walk in Holiness According to Our Specific Vocation”. Trans. *Acts of the General Chapter*. 417 (2014) 4. Print.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 2 §2b. 24.

⁷⁰See Paul VI. *Evangelica testificatio*. Par. 11. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 3 Dec. 2015. http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html

⁷¹The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes and the Sacred Congregation For Bishops. *Mutuae relationes*. Par. 11. Trans. The Holy See. n.d. Web. 28 Nov. 2015. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsclife/documents/rc_con_ccsclife_doc_14051978_mutuae-relationes_en.html

In his letter, “Preparation for the Bicentennial of the Birth of Don Bosco,” of January 31, 2011, Don Pascual Chavez, then Rector Major, stated:

It is necessary... to draw on the sources and on the studies about Don Bosco, in order to deepen our knowledge first of all about him as a person. The study of Don Bosco is an essential condition in order to be able to communicate his charism and propose his current relevance. Without knowledge there cannot be love, imitation or intercession; then only love can lead to greater knowledge. It is a question therefore of a knowledge which starts from love and leads to love: an affective knowledge.⁷²

He added further along: “We must have a knowledge of Don Bosco’s spirituality and live it.”⁷³

More recently, in his first commentary on the *Strenna* – that of the bicentenary year of the birth of Don Bosco – the Rector Major, Don Ángel Fernández Artime continued to exhort the entire Salesian Family to “com[e] to know, and rediscover in all its fullness, the spirit of Don Bosco which today as always needs to have all its charismatic power and relevance.”⁷⁴

For the purpose of ensuring this knowledge about Don Bosco among the Salesian Cooperators, the *Project of Apostolic Life* exhorts: “To accompany the Aspirant’s process of discernment, the Association promotes formative paths which are both structured and flexible, whether communal or personal. These include the study and the analysis of some formative themes...”⁷⁵ Analogously, in regards to ongoing formation, it says: “Conscious of the importance of on-going formation, the Salesian Cooperators... dedicate time to reflection and study to deepen Sacred Scripture, the Doctrines of the Church, their knowledge of Don Bosco, and Salesian documents.”⁷⁶

As has already been underlined, in Salesian tradition, this knowledge needs to be made *concrete*, put into action, beyond being theoretical; it is naturally directed toward action and reinforces the Salesian Cooperator in his understanding of the vocation he has received.

If each one of us can come to feel *in our very being*, in the depth of our being that same fire, that passion for education that Don Bosco had, meeting each young person at a deeply personal level, believing in each individual, convinced that in each one there is always a seed of goodness and of the Kingdom in order to help them to give the very best of themselves and to draw them to a close encounter with the Lord Jesus, then we shall certainly embody in our lives the best of the Salesian charism.⁷⁷

⁷²Pascual Chávez, SDB. “Preparation for the Bicentennial of the Birth of Don Bosco.” Par. 1. Trans. Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. 31 January 2011. Web 28 Nov. 2015. <http://www.infoans.org/2.asp?sez=2&sotsez=13&doc=6062&Lingua=2>

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Angel Fernández Artime, SDB. “Like Don Bosco, with the Young, for the Young.” Par. 3. Trans. n.d. Web 28 Nov. 2015. <http://www.sdb.org/en/rector-major/1058-strenna-rm-projects/1747-strenna-2015-commentary>

⁷⁵*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article. 15 §2. 79-80.

⁷⁶Ibid. Article 16 §1. 80-81.

⁷⁷“Like Don Bosco, with the Young, for the Young.” Par. 3 §1.

Indicated Actions

It is important to:

- come to know, gradually and in an *affective* way the story, the pedagogy, and the spirituality of the Founder, matured also by means of a living contact with the numerous printed works of Don Bosco;
- know the distinctive traits of Salesian identity, in particular, God as Provident Father and Mary as the Help of Christians and Mother;
- read and meditate on the *Project of Apostolic Life* and its official commentary;
- know the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family* – which helps us to mature in the sense of belonging to Don Bosco’s Family;
- be familiar with the history of the origins and of the development of the Association, and other documents, e.g., “Animating Economic Solidarity” (ASE) or the Acts of the Provincial, Regional or World Congresses;
- assimilate the life and the spiritual experience of the Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables of the Salesian Family – especially those of some exemplary Cooperators and of those who were venerated in a particular way at Valdocco and Mornese; and
- comprehend and value the annual comment on the *Strenna*, which marks, generally speaking, the annual formative itinerary for the Salesian Family. The other documents of the teaching office of the Rector Major are also of great relevance.

1.3.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

General Principles

An integral part of the formative process is a *practical apostolic commitment*, which represents also a "place" of discernment and of verification of the Salesian vocation. Don Bosco “undertook a striking series of activities by his words, writings, institutes, journeys, meetings with civil and religious authorities; for them, above all else, he showed an attentive concern for each one individually, so that in his fatherly love the boys might see a sign of a higher love still.”⁷⁸

The *Project of Apostolic Life* confirms:

Don Bosco was a practical and enterprising man, an untiring and creative worker, animated by an uninterrupted and profound interior life. Faithful to his spirit and attentive to reality, Salesian Cooperators have a sense of the concrete. They discern the signs of the times and with a spirit of initiative push themselves to give appropriate responses to the needs of the youth in their territory and in society. They are constantly ready to verify and to re-adapt their response.”⁷⁹

“It was this special love for the young, for each young person, that led him to do everything that was possible, to break every mould, to confound every stereotype in order to reach out to them... led Don Bosco to put his whole being into finding ways to help them in their growth and development, their

⁷⁸See John Paul II. *Iuvenum Patris*. Par. 4. 31 January 1988. Web. 5 Dec. 2015. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19880131_iuvenum-patris.html

⁷⁹*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 11 §1. 75.

human welfare and their eternal salvation... For Don Bosco, therefore, being a man of heart meant being totally consecrated to the good of his boys and giving them his all even to his last breath!"⁸⁰

The starting point for our *making the Salesian charism flesh and blood (INCARNATING)* is your BEING WITH THE YOUNG, being with them and among them, being in contact with them in their daily lives, knowing their world, loving their world, encouraging them to be the protagonists in their own lives, reawakening their sense of God, helping them to live with high aims."⁸¹

Sharing the apostolic project of Don Bosco and his fields of apostolate might require the acquisition of certain specific *abilities* which will render the Salesian Cooperator more suited to being an apostle and *educator to the Faith* in the style and the spirit of the Founder along with the required competencies and professionalism. Most of all, it must spring from a concrete and zealous love for those to whom the work is directed in one's own apostolic mission. This is the underlying motivation which inspires and sustains the entire formative journey: to be a good *gift*, a gift prepared with care, for those to whom we are sent and for our very *companions on the journey*.

Indicated Actions

It is necessary to:

- join study with practical tasks and reflection with action, as in the best Salesian tradition;
- work with competence in the privileged and most characteristic fields of Salesian apostolate – those indicated by Article 11 of the *Statutes*: 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; and witness to the Faith in socio-political service;
- acquire some specific *skills and abilities* which are necessary for each form of apostolate in which the Salesian Cooperator is engaged;
- look at today with a prophetic gaze so as to interpret the signs of the times with the creativity typical of Don Bosco;
- grow in the ability to listen and have the courage to establish a "horizontal" dialogue, without pretending to have a monopoly on the truth; and
- develop the ability to grow with the young, through their words, their presence, their absences, or their *indifference*, as well as their responses and their silence.

1.3.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

General Principles

The Salesian Cooperator, called by the Holy Spirit to live the apostolic Salesian vocation, assumes a specific way of living the Gospel and participating in the mission of the Church, taking as his point of reference and inspiration the experience of faith and of the apostolic mission lived and witnessed to by St. John Bosco.

For the Salesian Cooperator to form oneself is to discover and to nourish one's Salesian vocation.

⁸⁰“Like Don Bosco, with the Young, for the Young.” Par. 3 §1.

⁸¹Ibid. Par. 4 §1.

In responding to the call which God has made to him, he enters consciously into a process which brings him to take on the charismatic project of Don Bosco. He lives it day by day in the diverse circumstances and stages of his life and in a way which is appropriate for the concrete demands of the area in which he finds himself and for his own real possibilities. Thus, he is able to be what he is called to be:

- a Christian who has the task to evangelize culture and social life, taking his inspiration from the Salesian spirit and the Beatitudes;
- a collaborator in building the Kingdom, who, within the ordinary conditions of his life, lives the Gospel ideal of love of God and of his neighbor. He educates and evangelizes the young, especially the most needy, promotes and defends the value of the family, and sustains the missionary and educational activities of the Salesian Family;
- an educator who adopts the pedagogy of goodness, the Preventive System of Don Bosco, as his method of action and style of relationship; and
- a Salesian, who, guided by the Holy Spirit, welcomes Don Bosco's charism as a gift from the Lord, making it fruitful according to his specific condition.

Indicated Actions

It is indispensable to:

- unify one's very life in God, according to the teachings and the witness of Don Bosco, who has come to be defined by his own companions as *union with God*;
- mature gradually in that apostolic charity which constitutes the heart of Don Bosco's spiritual experience, uniting it in one single "Movement" towards God and his young people;
- live Salesian spirituality in communion with the Church, reinforcing it by frequenting the Sacraments and allowing their Grace to transform one's life;
- cultivate a filial love for the Help of Christians and venerate in a special manner the Saints of the Salesian Family; and
- grow in some attitudes and values which characterize the Salesian spirit:
 - joy as the style of one's daily life;
 - optimism as trust in the victory of the good;
 - appreciation for human values;
 - the Salesian asceticism of the *cetera tolle* and work and temperance;
 - initiative, dynamism, and creativity in acting; and
 - the capacity to adapt to diverse circumstances and times.

1.3.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

General Principles

The vocation of the Salesian Cooperator is incarnated in a concrete fraternal form as a member of the Association.

For the Cooperator, living the Salesian spirit translates into a specific way of relating with God and with others. "Salesian Cooperators, taking their inspiration from the Preventive System of Don Bosco, practice loving-kindness in their relationships as a sign of the love of God and as a means 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."⁸²

⁸²*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 18. 38.

This relationship begins with those closest to him. “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’ they live their communion with those bonds characteristic of Don Bosco’s spirit.”⁸³

To be brothers and sisters is to live an experience of community. This particular call brings one to live Christian and Salesian fraternity in the perspective of a concrete mission: to contribute to the salvation of the young, especially those most in need.

Indicated Actions

It is fundamental to:

- grow in availability, in particular to the life of the Local Center, in the capacity to take the first step and always to welcome others with goodness, respect, and patience, by promoting relationships of trust and of friendship so as to create a family climate marked by simplicity and affection;
- construct peace through concrete gestures in ordinary daily life and seek consensus and accord through dialogue;
- participate actively, in the family life of the Association, in an appropriate manner according to one's realities and situations, so as to come to know each other, grow together, exchange one's faith experiences, and draw up apostolic plans:
 - making the Center the fundamental nucleus of the associative reality, and one's Christian community of reference;
 - participating in the planning and evaluation meetings for the various activities;
 - feeling that one is a part of this Association at the different levels: Local, Provincial, Regional, and World;
 - carrying out the responsibilities of leadership with an attitude of fidelity and a spirit of service, in the case that one is called to this; and
 - supporting the Association economically according to the criteria of solidarity among brothers and sisters;
- share within the Association the co-responsibility for the educational mission and evangelization, contributing so as to make it a reality according to each one's personal conditions of life and his or her abilities and possibilities;
- consider working together as a fundamental element of one's very identity: “Feeble forces that unite become strong. A single strand may be easily broken, but a three-ply cord is hard to break: *Vis unita fortior; funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.*”⁸⁴;
- respond to the challenges and the needs of young people who are the most poor and seek together with other Groups of the Salesian Family and other ecclesial and civic groups to give an adequate response to the demands of the area in which one lives; and
- care for communion and collaboration with the other Groups of the Salesian Family, in a particular way with the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and cultivate sentiments of sincere affection for and of fidelity to the Rector Major.

⁸³*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations.* Statutes, Article 21. 41.

⁸⁴See Giovanni Bosco. “Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Society.” Article I. 1876 ed. in *Don Bosco: History and Spirit.* Vol. VI. Trans. Arthur J. Lenti, SDB. (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2009) 239. Print.

CHAPTER 2. MOMENTS, MEANS, AND HUMAN RESOURCES

One must confront oneself with the present cultural context even in the methodological area of formation. The great transformations of modern society render the transmission of values more difficult. For this reason, today one speaks of a true and proper *educational emergency*.

In this context, formation must face up to both the difficulties and the opportunities which this new cultural context offers. The hard work that it takes to contribute to make clear identity and knowledgeable and stable choices flourish in a "weak thought" society [a philosophical concept introduced by the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo] must be illuminated, before all else, by a good understanding and knowledge of the characteristics of "post-modern" man. Subjectivism, secularism, religious indifference, "nomadism," relativism in the moral sphere, and dependence on the mass media, are all "challenges" which the formative experience must confront, especially in those areas concerning young people, if it wishes to have an impact on the growth and the maturation of the person. At the same time, studies on learning, on the formation of adults, and other new technologies represent an extraordinary resource at the service of all those who have a direct responsibility in the area of formation.

Multimedia communication, then, can contribute in rendering more vital and "daily" those ties which bind the members of the Association at all levels. The official *web pages* are very important resources which permit all the Centers to know the formation proposal and itineraries and the different initiatives and opportunities at the Local, Provincial, Regional, and World Levels.

Thus, it happens that, in addition to certain "traditional" moments and means of formation experience, the Association today has at its disposition new languages and new techniques which can render the sharing of content and experiences richer and more efficacious and can help the sense of belonging grow. Initial and ongoing formation can thus reach more deeply into daily life, in such a way that every attitude or gesture, in important moments and in the ordinary circumstances of life, will be able to reveal the full and joyful *belonging* of the Salesian Cooperator to God and to the Association.

2.1. MOMENTS AND MEANS

Some of these *particular moments* and *means* will be highlighted now – those in which the path of formation is concretely incarnated. Opportunities offered by the Association will be distinguished from those at the disposal of each and every individual Salesian Cooperator for it is the Cooperator who is the architect of and primarily responsible for his or her processes of *formation*.

2.1.1. PARTICULAR MOMENTS AND MEANS OFFERED BY THE ASSOCIATION

Some initiatives and modalities are offered here which concern those moments planned by the Association. When these are prepared with accuracy and care and incarnated in the situation and the concrete life of each individual Center or Province, constitute the *ordinary strategy* for developing the different formative processes.

Each one of these formative initiatives, in the light of what has been said in the preceding chapter, must take into account the fact that formation is not only the *transmission of content* (to know), but must also know how to communicate *skills and abilities* (to know how to do), and, above all, contribute to the growth of one's *identity* (to know how to be) and to one's *participation* in the life of the Association (to know how to live in communion).

Periodic formative encounters

Periodic formative encounters, whether in the initial phases of formation or in *ongoing* formation, represent the most important moments in the life of the Local Center. The Local Coordinator, in accord

with the Delegate and/or the Formator, provides an appropriate plan, taking into account the pace and the concrete possibilities of each member, in addition to those particular needs which are tied to the area in which they live. Ordinarily, at least one monthly meeting should be held regularly.

The task of these encounters is to contribute to growth in the sense of belonging and of fraternal life. In order to reach this objective, properly-directed *group dynamics* can be useful.

As regards content, besides the general framework presented by these *Guidelines*, one must also keep in mind the *Strenna* of the Rector Major and the proposals of the Local or Universal Church.

The planning of these encounters must be agreed upon and shared in an adequate manner. They are an object of verification on the part of the Provincial Council.

Occasional gatherings on specific topics

Some "extraordinary" gatherings to treat of some specific topics, or those of particular ecclesial and social interest, can be promoted by the Local or Provincial Councils. It is important to offer formative occasions on important social issues, whether they be local, national, or international, in order to cultivate lay spirituality in the Cooperators.

The method used in the meetings

The choice of a method to adopt for the meetings is of great importance. The *inductive* method; the possibility of living and personal contact with the texts or the documents presented; the opportune use of techniques of communication which favor attention and participation; debate properly-animated; and a review at the end of each individual meeting: all of these contribute to making the formative experience efficacious and gratifying.

Guided apostolic experiences

The formative experience must reach the person of the Salesian Cooperator not only at an intellectual level but must also be able to give him the skills necessary to live his identity even in his apostolic dimension. In particular, important apostolic experiences can be placed along the path of initial formation which are guided or accompanied by other Cooperators who are more skilled.

Annual gatherings and meetings

It is the responsibility of the leadership of the Association to encourage and to foster the participation of the Cooperators in some gathering – organized at the Provincial, Regional, or World Level – whether it be from the Church-at-large or the Salesian Family. This refers to experiences which will provide an intense spiritual richness, generally leaving a strong resonance within individuals, and which will help them grow notably in the sense of belonging to the Church and to the Salesian Family.

Formative materials and aids

Those who are responsible for formation, at all the different levels, will see to it that the *Annual Plan of Formation* is drawn up and will also put at disposition, if possible, multimedia material which will give unity and greater efficacy to the formative itineraries of each Local Center.

Today, in the area of adult formation, experiences and e-learning are multiplying. Online courses which enrich and simplify the formative experience also provide a particularly *unifying* contribution. These forms of learning, however, cannot substitute accompaniment, personal dialogue, or growth within a *group*, which, by its very nature is part and parcel of the formation and the identity of the Salesian Cooperator.

With this understood, there is still the need to increase the production and the spreading of multimedia materials (videos, presentations, outlines, forms, etc.) which could be put at disposition or more easily found even through the creation of a *data bank* which gathers all the different materials produced in the different regions.

2.1.2. SPIRITUAL LIFE RESOURCES

Care for one's spiritual life is found in the convergence between the opportunities offered by the Association and the personal concern which each Salesian Cooperator has for his faith life and for his growth in spiritual maturity and understanding of the vocation he or she has received.

Spiritual retreats

Don Bosco used to recommend the monthly retreat as an indispensable tool in the life of the Association. In the first *Rule of 1876*, he wrote: “On the last day of each month or on some other convenient day, they shall make their *Exercise for a Happy Death*, and make their Confession and Communion as if it was really their last.”⁸⁵ The concern for eternal salvation constituted, in Don Bosco's time, the horizon of some *practices of piety* which he bequeathed to his spiritual family. The fact remains that, still today, taking responsibility for time in one's life, as a free *gift* of God, and finding the chance to stop the usual pace of one's days every now and then so as to “take one's life in hand” represents an extraordinary resource on the path towards human maturity and the *good life of the Gospel*.

The seasons of the liturgical year are to be kept in mind when organizing these spiritual retreats.

The annual spiritual exercises

Each year, according to the indications of the Founder, the Cooperator has the opportunity to participate in a few days of spiritual exercises. These constitute a “strong moment of spirituality in which the vocational fidelity of the members is renewed with the *Promise*.”⁸⁶ Don Bosco considered them the true and proper *summation* of all the other practices of piety.

In places where it is difficult to organize these at the Local Level, the Local and Provincial Councils can promote their organization at the level of an area through the work of a few Centers which are near to each other geographically, or at the Provincial Level.

Holy Mass and other prayer encounters

One reads in the *Project of Apostolic Life*: “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.”⁸⁷

The Eucharist is the *source* and the *summit* from which the experience of every believer begins and to which he is headed. Growth in the Eucharistic attitudes of *welcoming, listening, pardoning, being thankful, sharing, communion, and mission* represent the most important contribution to the life of each individual Cooperator and each Center.

Given that a prayer moment is integrated into every one of the meetings of the Association, it is opportune to organize other prayer encounters or celebrations of the Word – according to the different needs which arise and also on the occasion of significant social, ecclesial, or Salesian Family events.

Marian devotion and the Rosary

The Daily Entrustment to Mary is a characteristic element of Don Bosco's spirituality. The Salesian Cooperator finds in the prayer of the rosary simple nourishment for his or her Marian devotion and a concrete aid along the path of his or her life.

⁸⁵*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Society*. Article VIII §2.

⁸⁶*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 25 §4. 97.

⁸⁷*Ibid.* Statutes, Article 19 §1. 39.

Spiritual accompaniment

The choice of a guide and personal spiritual accompaniment represents a very important resource in Salesian tradition. Don Bosco often used to recommend the chance to have a *stable confessor* who would be a companion even in the most difficult moments of one's existence as believers because he is starting from an adequate knowledge of the *history* and the *life* of each penitent.

For Salesian Cooperator married couples, it can be useful to choose, by common agreement, a *guide* who can accompany the couple on their journey and also their family throughout the entire time of the education of their children.

Pilgrimages

The metaphor of the *path* or the *journey* is one of the most apt in describing the experience of maturation and growth of a man. In Christian tradition and in that of many other religions, the *pilgrimage* represents an important moment which allows one to join his personal human and spiritual experience to a particular place or a particular person. Don Bosco himself, on the occasion of his annual spiritual exercises at the sanctuary of St. Ignatius above Lanzo, lived the experience of “the ascent of the mountain” as a privileged moment of ascesis and reflection.

For the Cooperators, knowledge, in particular, of the *places where Don Bosco lived, grew up, studied, and worked* constitutes an extraordinary opportunity to set one's heart on fire again and to increase one's love for the Founder and the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family.

2.1.3. TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR SELF-FORMATION

The Salesian Cooperator is the one who is primarily responsible for his formation. For this reason, and always keeping in mind that he is “integrated into the world and the Church,” he or she will be especially sensitive to the moments, the means, and the situations which can contribute to his or her formation, keeping an ever attentive gaze on some traditional forms of maturation and of growth.

The Personal Plan of Life

The insistence on the great advantage of making a *Personal Plan of Life* is constant and consistent with the different formative paths of Religious Orders, Congregations, and Associations.

Don Bosco used to speak often of the virtue of *temperance*. This virtue consists not only in *moderation*, but above all in the capacity to *organize time in one's life* in a balanced and harmonious manner: time for work and for rest, time to dedicate to one's family and time spent in one's apostolic commitment, time for study and time for prayer. This is the reason why the virtue of temperance is often represented in art and in iconography as a lady who holds in her hands a timepiece or an hourglass.

A *Personal Plan of Life* serves to help one schedule and, as much as is possible, guarantee this precious *balance* which contains the secret to serenity. It takes some thinking and foresight and is better written down, listing some daily, weekly, monthly, and annual *times* which guarantee a harmonious growth in one's experience as a human being, a Christian, and a Salesian.

Even the *time* that is to be dedicated to one's own formation must be planned with care.

The Association's Official Site and the World Wide Web

For those Cooperators who have the possibility and the competence necessary to take advantage of the *Internet*, frequent contact with the *official site* of the Cooperators of one's own Region or Province, or even of one's own Local Center, represents a precious instrument for growth in the sense of belonging and an opportunity to read and to make use of the formative materials that have been put there at the disposition of the Association. The same attention can be paid also to the many official pages of the different Congregations and Associations which are part of the Salesian Family and, in particular, to those of the SDB and the FMA.

Personal study

Don Bosco used to dedicate much time to study, as his numerous biographies attest.

This habit of “keeping the flame alive” – of love and of belonging to the Salesian Family – through the reading of texts of older and more recent tradition and, especially, of the works of the Founder helps one to know and to be faithful to the charism and the precious heritage which has been handed down.

Citing a noted statement of Nelson Mandela, one can affirm that “education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world” – and oneself.

The autobiography as a means of caring for oneself

The spiritual diary represents one of the tools suggested by the Masters of spiritual life for fostering and accompanying one's own spiritual journey; the autobiography, then, is one of the literary genres which were most dear to the history of spirituality. A few recent studies attest that the moment in which one feels the desire to “tell one's story,” this is an unequivocal sign of being in a new stage towards maturity. The little child and the adolescent do not know how to link with each other the experiences they make. The ability to establish connections, concordances, and coincidences is learned at a much more advanced age; and thus the memory of the past is transformed into *gratitude* and, contemporaneously, into the awareness of a *task*.

Updating

The Salesian Cooperator lives in the world and is integrated into an area and a particular context of society. It is his or her responsibility to remain constantly updated by means of social communications and to utilize all the resources at one's disposition to improve professional competency and the understanding of his or her commitment to be an *honest citizen* and a *good Christian*, according to Don Bosco's teachings.

2.2. HUMAN RESOURCES

“The Association promotes and supports personal and group formation through the action of qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, and other members of the Salesian Family.”⁸⁸

The Association itself is also a *subject* of ongoing formation, in the sense that it must construct itself and remain faithful to itself while renewing itself, giving attention to the signs of the times. It must be capable of living and growing according to a well-defined plan. Its tasks are to help the members respond to their Salesian vocation, to promote and support the works of the Association, and to ensure its functioning as regards its apostolic purposes. It assumes its responsibilities: in particular, the fecundity of the charism, the development of the Association itself, and the maturation of apostolic and formative initiatives.

The Association makes use of some characteristic human resources which guarantee the quality and the continuity of formation.

2.2.1. GUARANTORS

The *Project of Apostolic Life* identifies those who are responsible for formation, according to the different persons and levels to whom it is directed:

– the Local Formator, in agreement at all times with the Provincial Council and with his/her Delegate, cares for the formation of the Local Center and the Local Council;

⁸⁸*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 29 §2. 48.

- the Provincial Council has the task of promoting and accompanying the formation of the Local Councils. The Provincial Formator is the one who is responsible to coordinate this task within the Provincial Council;
- the Provincial Formator, always in agreement with his or her Delegates, will also care for the formation of the Provincial Council;
- the Regional and/or World Delegates, in conjunction with the Provincial Delegates, are responsible for the specific formation of the Local Delegates⁸⁹;
- every Regional Consulta, in conformity with its internal organization, “shares the challenges of the apostolate and of formation for the benefit of the entire Region”⁹⁰; and
- the World Council “furnishes general guidelines as regard formative... initiatives.”⁹¹

2.2.2. THE LOCAL CENTER

“The fundamental nucleus of the Association is the Local Center.”⁹² In it, the Salesian Cooperators become a living community where they pray together, discern about concrete and particular situations, and share apostolic commitments and the very vocation that they are living.

Therefore, the growth and maturation of its members is entrusted to each Local Center. This carries with it the fact that the Salesian Cooperators are also responsible for the formation of their brothers and sisters: it is necessary to help each other grow, discern, mature, and be faithful to one's vocation.

Closeness, listening, support, and understanding lived in continuous and ordinary forms among the members of the Center, especially in the moments of encounter, foster personal and vocational growth and contribute also to ongoing formation.

2.2.3. THE LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL COUNCILS

The Local Council, in its function as animator of the life of the Center:

- *discovers* the concrete needs for the growth and maturation of its members;
- *helps* with discernment;
- *motivates* re-visioning and renewal;
- *seeks out* appropriate resources for the different formative moments;
- *adapts* to its particular needs in every circumstance the means put at its disposal by the Association.

The Provincial Council animates the life of the Centers which belong to its Province by:

- *studying* the particular formative needs of each individual Center;
- *coordinating* and promoting encounters which tend to ensure a regular and constant formative process to all the Centers;
- *fostering* the formation of those who are responsible on the local level for formative experiences; and
- *creating* formative itineraries and material, paying attention to the eventual guidelines of the World and/or Regional Consulta and utilizing and adapting said resources to the Provincial reality.

⁸⁹See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 23 §6-7. 94.

⁹⁰Ibid. Article 34 §2. 108.

⁹¹Ibid. Article 31 §2. 104.

⁹²Ibid. Statutes, Article 36 §1. 54.

2.2.4. SPECIALLY-QUALIFIED SALESIAN COOPERATORS

Actions of the Council are, by nature, collegial. Thus, ongoing formation is the responsibility of all its members. This notwithstanding, the work of *Cooperators who are specially qualified* is also necessary. They, as Councilors for formation or as members of special commissions, concretize in each and every situation the response which the Association offers to the needs of the Salesian Cooperators at every moment. This need implies, in particular, the ongoing formation of the *Formator*, done with special care.

2.2.5. THE DELEGATES

Delegates have special responsibilities in different areas. 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.”⁹³

In a co-responsible manner and in collaboration with the Councils, the Delegates participate in the formation initiatives promoted by the Association.

It is their task to be attentive to the spiritual needs of the Salesian Cooperators, personally accompanying them and proposing particular initiatives when requested.

⁹³*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 26 §3. 45.

CHAPTER 3. PHASES OF FORMATION

Every vocation in the Church arises from a call from God to follow Him on a path of authentic felicity and personal realization. “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.”⁹⁴

This journey begins with a personal, free, gradual, and motivated choice which is matured under the action of the Holy Spirit with the support and under the guidance of some men and women who render it possible for the *seed* which the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of each one to mature.

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.⁹⁵

There are two distinct phases in the formation of Salesian Cooperators:

- the first is the one that goes by the name of “initial formation,” which begins with the period of Aspirancy and which concludes with the making of the *apostolic Promise*; and
- the second is “ongoing formation,” which lasts one's entire life.

3.1. INITIAL FORMATION

The understanding of the importance of formation raises up in the Association the fervent desire to offer an adequate formation program and, within the Cooperator Aspirants, the fervent desire to put this opportunity to good use.

A program of this nature must respond principally to three exigencies:

- to equal up to the importance of the specific objective of this timeframe, which is that of verifying one's true call in view of a possible entrance into the Association with the making of the *Promise* – the expression of man’s response to God's call;
- to be suitable to the age, the level of maturity, and the human, Christian, and Salesian preparation of the Aspirants; and
- to be adapted to the cultural and ecclesial reality of the area in which one lives.

The initial formation of Aspirants is, by its nature, better and more efficacious if lived within a *group* and integrated into the life of the Local Center.

In the case in which it is not possible to form a group, the Aspirants will still have the possibility, however, of following a personal formative path according to the guidelines and suggestions of those who are responsible for formation in the Local Center, or on the Provincial Council, and who are to take care to accompany the Aspirants on their journey.

⁹⁴*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 2 §1. 24.

⁹⁵*Ibid.* Article 27 §1. 47.

3.1.1. GOAL

The goal of initial formation within the Association is to help and to accompany the Aspirants as they discern and mature in their own personal vocation to assume a responsible commitment in the Church.

3.1.2. THE PROPOSAL

The starting point for initial formation is the *proposal*, the personal invitation to evaluate the opportunity to become a Salesian Cooperator.

This invitation to know and to deepen the vocational proposal can be made to “Catholics of whatever cultural or social circumstance”⁹⁶ who desire to live a life of “committed” faith in “the every day,” characterized by two attitudes:

– *inasmuch as they are children of God*: to know God as Father and as the Love that saves; to encounter Jesus Christ, His only Begotten Son, perfect Apostle of the Father; and to live in intimacy with the Holy Spirit, the true animator of God’s people;

– *inasmuch as they are members of the Church*: to know that they are 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.”⁹⁷

To whom is the Proposal made?

When considering proposing this life to someone, one must keep in mind some aspects or criteria, taking into consideration Article 27 of the *Statutes of the Project of Apostolic Life*. In the light of this article, the person to whom the proposal is made:

- is capable of making a free choice, with proper motivations;
- is aware of the fact that he finds himself at the beginning of a process of maturation;
- remains open to the action of the Holy Spirit; i.e., he or she knows how to locate the origin of his or her search far beyond personal desires and opinions;
- accepts the formation program proposed by the Association for the purpose of confirming this call; and
- lives at a certain level of Christian commitment, participating in the life of the Church and in the Sacraments.

Beginning from these premises, and keeping in mind the fact that the vocational proposal is personal and is born from a universal and non-exclusive concept which embraces every believer, the proposal is to be made especially to:

- Christians who are interested in the world of youth;
- Animators who are working in the youth pastoral, in Salesian youth ministry, and to the young of the Salesian Youth Movement;
- pupils and past pupils of Salesian works who are especially close to Don Bosco’s spirit;
- friends and those who love Don Bosco and the Salesian work;
- teachers and collaborators in Salesian works;
- members of ADMA;
- family members of the SDB, the FMA, and of the Salesian Cooperators themselves;
- collaborators in parishes, catechists, and those working in the apostolate to families;
- Diocesan Priests and Deacons who feel drawn to the Salesian mission; and
- former Religious of the Salesian Family.

⁹⁶*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 2 §2. 24.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

Initial contact

All the members of the Association feel and share the need to identify persons to whom to make the identity of the Salesian Cooperator known and to whom to make the *proposal* – for it is an invitation to discover the beauty and the extraordinary timeliness of Don Bosco's charism.

There are many ways to make this proposal: from an individual invitation to a group presentation, taking into consideration particular situations. It is important that it be made: within a climate of welcome and of familiarity; as an opportunity offered and a commitment to be made; and in a joyful way so that it might be welcomed and accepted.

Obviously, the proposal must be a personal one because the call of God to everyone is personal. In the same way, the response which each one is called to give is also personal.

Once a personal invitation has been made, it is customary to hold a presentation about the Association for the group of Aspirants. It is to be considered the beginning of the path of formation and is to assure the Aspirant that he or she will have the accompaniment necessary along the journey which he or she is invited to make.

3.1.3. ENTRANCE INTO THE ASSOCIATION

During this formative journey, the Aspirant will have the opportunity to assume a serious process of *discernment* regarding the authenticity of his or her own motivations and, in particular, regarding his or her desire to make his very life a joyful gift, in the spirit of Don Bosco.

When he will have recognized in himself and in his past life the signs of this particular call to live the Christian life, together with other men and women of goodwill and according to the spirituality of the Founder, he will be able to present a request for admission to the Council of the Local Center where he is being formed.⁹⁸

The Local Council will send the request to the Provincial Council, together with the evaluation that they will complete, after having heard the opinions of the one, or of those, who have cared in a particular way for the Aspirant's formation. It will be the Provincial Council that will approve the request, when considered opportune.⁹⁹

As one way to accompany this process of discernment of the Aspirants, here following some criteria for entrance into the Association are offered to the Formators and to the Councils.

These criteria are, by their nature, guidelines both for those who wish to enter to be part of the Association and for the Association itself which must evaluate the suitability of the Aspirant.

It is not superfluous, in fact, to underline that these criteria – whose application is broad and flexible – must always take into consideration the characteristics and the needs of both the Association and the Aspirant.

Some essential *priority criteria* regarding specific areas of life of the Salesian Cooperator are highlighted here.

Criteria regarding the vocation:

All those who are responsible for admitting persons to the Association must discern, through dialogue with the Aspirant, the signs of a true vocation (call and response) to this type of life and commitment. These signs are discerned with care and attention:

⁹⁸See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 27 §2. 47-48.
Ibid. Regulations. 13 §3. 77.

⁹⁹See *ibid.* Article 13 §4. 77-78.

– Beyond being a “good person” or a fervent and apostolic Christian, the Aspirant must demonstrate some signs of possessing the characteristic traits of Salesian spirituality and suitability for the Salesian mission.

– The Aspirant must discover in himself the beauty of Don Bosco's charism and the joy of becoming an "extern Salesian", in the world and in the Church, ready and available to live his gift of self in his Center, which will become his "Christian community of reference."

Criteria concerning the path to take:

It is important that the Aspirant:

– welcome the plan of initial formation as an opportunity which assures him, above all, of coming to know and of assimilating what is contained in the *Project of Apostolic Life*;

– gradually develop a sense of co-responsibility and of belonging to the Association, even beyond the Local Center;

– progressively mature in the comprehension that he or she is part of the Salesian Family, expressing this understanding in the interest that he or she shows in it and through active participation in its activities;

– realize that he lives on a permanent journey of growth;

– possess a balanced character and the human and affective maturity necessary to fulfill his or her personal family, professional, and civic responsibilities;

– manifest gradually a maturity in faith and charity in the life of prayer (both personal and community) in the practice of the Sacraments, in the spirit of union with God, and in apostolic zeal; and

– be committed and involved in his or her profession, family, and apostolic activities in a Christian way.

Criteria concerning motivations

One of the principal criteria for the admission of Aspirants springs from a serene *discernment of one's motivations*: every authentic Christian choice comes from the knowledge that the gift of life, which is received from God, must be gradually transformed into gratitude and into an understanding of the *task* which has been entrusted to a person. The Salesian vocation, as is the same with every other vocation, gradually requires the ability to go outside oneself – from the egocentricity which seems to characterize today's world – to learn to “orbit” around the world and the needs of others. It is a matter of discovering, in an existential way, that the only possible strategy to live true joy is that of becoming interested in the joy of one's companions on the journey and of all those to whom one is “sent.” The life of a believer then becomes a true *benediction*, a true blessing.

The path to sanctity draws its most special energies from the desire to "be a good gift" for all, rather than from the attainment of a perfection which is an end in itself.

With this perspective, the request arises from:

– personal motivations that are not “egocentric or self-centered”;

– a free and informed decision;

– reasons matured personally and evaluated critically, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit and by means of personal discernment and that of a group or of the Center;

– the desire to give generously of oneself;

– motivations in keeping with the vocation of the Cooperator; and

– the joy of wanting to belong to the Salesian Family.

Other criteria

It is necessary to keep in mind some other criteria when evaluating, with realism and common sense, the particular conditions and prior knowledge of each of the Aspirants:

– theological, pastoral, educative, and Salesian knowledge which is proportionate and sufficient

to carry out worthily the mission of the Salesian Cooperator and to participate responsibly in the life of the Church;

- knowledge of the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church in relation to certain topics of particular importance; e.g., the family, work, morality, and the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church;
- their experience with the Local Church and positive relations with other Movements, Associations, and groups; and
- their participation in gatherings, formation or spirituality days, retreats, spiritual exercises, etc., intended for the Cooperators and the Salesian Family.

3.1.4. METHODOLOGY FOR INITIAL FORMATION

The launching, the accompaniment, and the group animation of Aspirants demand from the Formator a basic knowledge of various types of group dynamics for the sake of knowing how to apply those which appear the most appropriate to each situation.

Initial formation must be:

- *living and vital*, not only doctrinal, so as to lead the Aspirant to an authentic experience of human, Christian, and Salesian life;
- *active*, able to raise up in each member of the group a “take charge” attitude;
- *demanding* and, at the same time, *respectful* of the pace of maturation and of the uniqueness of each person;
- preferably *in a group*, which is the true place in which one matures in his own vocation and has experience of Church and of Salesian life; and
- *part of a bigger picture*, always keeping the Gospel, the Catholic Church, the Salesian Family, and the Association of Salesian Cooperators as points of reference.

3.1.5. PRIORITY MOMENTS AND MEANS OF THIS STAGE

Accompaniment

To those who demonstrate the desire to deepen the vocational proposal, the Association commits itself to offer a formative path, agreeing on the times and the organizational aspects with the persons concerned so as to help them on their process of personal growth and discernment about their vocation.

Along the entire formative journey it is important that the Aspirants feel that the Association is close to their experience and not preoccupied with putting pressure on their choice but, rather, with sustaining them both humanly and spiritually. This should be so most especially in their experience of the Local Center. It is further important that they feel accompanied and integrated into the life of the Local Center and that they participate actively in the encounters, gatherings, and initiatives of the same.

The primary task, then, for the Local Council and the Salesian Cooperators of the Center, and in particular for the Formator and the Delegates, will be to guide and to accompany the Aspirants along their formative journey.

Accompaniment, in fact, constitutes a foundational experience along the path of maturation of the Aspirants; it is where each one comes to realize the action of the Holy Spirit and the free response and joyful involvement of each one and of everyone.

Method of accompaniment

Throughout the accompaniment process, the style and the Salesian method "of the good Shepherd" is used; this means walking together and creating a relationship of communion and communication through which there will be reciprocal aid to correspond to God's call, in active listening to the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of a relationship through which the Formator takes the initiative of going to meet with each Aspirant, walking beside each one, listening to and sharing the uncertainties, restlessness,

aspirations, and difficulties, and helping him or her go beyond them; i.e., entrusting each one directly to the reality of an intimate and personal encounter with God, which transforms one's existence.

Some characteristics of this method

- Walking beside the Aspirant

Each Aspirant is to be accompanied on the path of his or her maturation and growth. The journey must be carried forward step by step, each keeping pace with the other. This is not always easy; it requires from both sides a progressive growth in interior freedom, in overcoming every form of possessiveness, of dependency, and of trying to control others. Therefore, it is most important to live this time in a spirit of service and dynamic charity.

At the same time, the experience of accompanying another person can also be transformed into a formative moment for the one who has this responsibility. Teilhard de Chardin wrote: "Each time I am ever more convinced that when one teaches, he discovers an enormous quantity of truths which he comprehends only halfway: I learn by teaching."

- Knowing how to listen and to be creative

The process of accompaniment implies a growth in the capacity to listen, to wait patiently and respectfully according to the rate of growth of each person and with a sensitivity which permits one to foresee difficulties, and in the ability to put one's self in the shoes of the Aspirant.

It requires trust, constant attention, and courage to propose the demanding and joyful path of the Gospel and to respond to the hopes and the needs of the Aspirant's spiritual, formative, and apostolic character.

This method also demands that the Formator develop his inventiveness - a characteristic of the Salesian spirit which is untiring, enterprising, and creative.

- Knowing how to involve and help one become co-responsible

This method of accompaniment also requires that the Formator guide and motivate the active participation of each Aspirant. In order to attain this objective, he seeks to interest, to value, to promote and foster, to encourage, and to get the Aspirants involved. Moreover, he makes an effort to come to know each one personally, taking interest in his difficulties and problems and participating in his joys; above all, he encourages and motivates the Aspirants so that little by little, they become the ones who take charge of their own journey to maturity as a human being, a Christian, and a Salesian.

- Cultivating the sense of belonging to the Association

Being on this formative path also requires that one be strengthened in the sense of belonging to the Association and that the bonds of fraternity be developed by coordinating the initiatives, the experiences, and plans, and by cultivating this sense where the different levels (Local, Provincial, Regional, and World) are concerned.

This helps to mature in the Aspirant the knowledge of belonging to a much more vast reality, the one of the Association, making the dream of the Founder real for it reaches to the ends of the earth in service to the young, to the family, to the Church, and to civic realities.

In this way, as brothers and sisters in Don Bosco, the Aspirants will grow in the style of fraternal, sincere, respectful, and disinterested relationships which will allow them to recognize the importance of the other by becoming knowledgeable of their own limits, too, and witnessing joy, esteem, and reciprocal affection.

- Proposing forms of communion and collaboration

Finally, this method helps the Aspirant open himself to forms of communion and collaboration, not only with the Salesian Family and other ecclesial bodies, but also with the civic, socio-cultural, political, and humanitarian organizations, including unions, as well – and, in particular, with those which are at the service of the young.

Accompaniment must lead to an authentic vision of Salesian life as joyful commitment and service to the young and to the poorer classes of people, leading one to work at their side in the spirit of the *da mihi animas, cetera tolle*. This is an *art* which involves the entire person in a process of mutual interaction. No path of accompaniment exists which involves only one of the two persons concerned.

To conclude, it seems important to underline that accompaniment is not a "neutral" process: notwithstanding that its purpose is to help, it can run the risk of blocking one's openness to his or her vocation. For this reason it is necessary that the Formator take conscious awareness of his great responsibility in accompanying the formative processes and, therefore, must himself walk a path of accompaniment and of formation to qualify for this field. Above all, he must feel the joy of helping a brother or a sister in the discovery of the *good life of the Gospel* lived with the heart of Don Bosco.

The particular ministry of accompaniment is learned in daily life and with the help of all the members of the Center because all are co-responsible for formation.¹⁰⁰

The Personal Plan of Life of the Aspirant

During the time of initial formation, the Aspirant learns to draw up his or her *Personal Plan of Life* and to feel the need to put it into practice for one's entire life. This gradual application will help the Aspirant render his or her journey more concrete and live the Salesian Gospel identity in the specific place, situation, and time of this vocational growth.

3.1.6. PLANNING

Initial formation is the one which lays the foundation for dynamic growth in one's identity – a growth which ought to continue for one's entire life through serious commitment and a continual updating. It is an open and continuous process which, ordinarily, moves forward in three different moments: initiation, deepening, and decision. These three moments are here described, according to the criteria of flexibility, out of respect for the differing rhythms of growth of each person.¹⁰¹

Initiation

The objective of this moment is to draw near to the project of life of the Salesian Cooperators.

This will take place, initially, through a presentation of this particular vocation and a knowledge of the figure of Don Bosco.

During this phase certain fundamental topics of human and Christian formation are covered which will serve to clarify those elements which are indispensable when following a path to maturity.

Deepening

During the second moment, one will deepen his understanding of the vocation as a Salesian Cooperator through coming to know and assimilating the *Project of Apostolic Life*, which calls for a response and a progressive maturation of one's motivations and choices.

Decision

The objective of the third moment is that of growing towards a serious and knowledgeable acceptance and welcoming of the Salesian Cooperator vocation.

This is the time for bringing all the elements together and of vital discernment in respect to the

¹⁰⁰In the Appendix, by way of suggestion, is a description of the "Accompaniment Portfolio" of the Aspirants to the Salesian Cooperators. This is a tool whose purpose is to help the Formator follow the formative process of the Aspirant.

¹⁰¹In Attachment Number 1, some particular items to pay special attention to during these three moments of initial formation are highlighted.

project of life that is proposed.

It is appropriate to plan content and significant experiences during this moment which, in a particular way, will help the Aspirant make his *apostolic Promise*. It is the pronouncement of the *Promise* which marks one's entrance into the Association.

3.2. ONGOING FORMATION

The formation of the human person lasts one's entire life. A person is, in fact, always in a process of growth and therefore needs to acquire ever more mature convictions and profound motivations.

Daily life situations, then, whether personal or family and social, are in continuous evolution and present ever new questions which demand that each person rethink - in dynamic fidelity to his fundamental values - his personal choices and look at his personal positions anew. The human person grows and matures in the measure in which he or she is capable of learning from life and is able to respond with creativity to the new situations which this presents to him or her.

Moreover, the *sequela Christi* and evangelization require answers and forms of proclamation which need to be constantly updated since they always need to be incarnated in the historical situations which are in constant evolution. The same thing can be said about the Salesian apostolate which, having as its privileged task the education of the young, requires openness and an effort to update and adapt oneself to the situations which change and to the new needs which arise.

In the human as well in the Christian and Salesian sphere, the Cooperator knows that he or she is called to maintain constantly an active enthusiasm for his vocation and to learn from life. This brings with it an attitude of response, a mentality of and a desire for growth which extends the formative process right up until the end of life. His entire life, in fact, is vocation and formation – a formation which needs to be updated in creative fidelity.

The evolving and dynamic character of a person; Christian life as a permanent vocation lived in the dynamic of call and response; the mission of the Salesian Cooperator; and the accelerated rhythms of transformation of the world: all these things render a continuous formation necessary. Such is part and parcel of the personal responsibility of the Salesian Cooperator and also that of the Association which must foster it by planning and seeing through appropriate initiatives.¹⁰²

The ongoing formation of the Salesian Cooperator, as a process of continual maturation, has a very precise purpose which justifies and helps one discover its necessity and importance. It is a matter of learning ever better to live one's own vocation as a permanent response to the Lord and to the challenges of the mission – with maturity and joy, with creative fidelity, and with the ability to be renewed.

3.2.1. NATURE AND PURPOSE

Ongoing formation can be defined as an expression and a global process of configuration of the person by means of life-long learning and maturing.

Such formation happens before all else in "the life of everyday." It is here that the vocation becomes experience while one acquires the attitude of learning from life. It is not merely a task, or an individual or isolated experience of one person, but presents itself as a community experience and the fruit of fraternal sharing, of mutual relationships, and of quality communication.

The richness and complexity of this category can be perceived by keeping in mind that the ongoing formation of the Salesian Cooperator has certain characteristics. It:

– *characterizes* one's whole life, valuing each one's qualities and adapting them to the concrete circumstances of each moment;

¹⁰²See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 16. 80-82.

- *values and appreciates* the different moments or stages of one's existence so as to update the commitment to the vocation assumed and incarnated;
- *involves each one* in a particular way, inasmuch as it is each person who must respond to God's permanent call in the different circumstances of his life and according to the action of the Holy Spirit;
- *cares* especially for the prayer and Sacramental life along each one's particular path, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit;
- *involves* all the environments in which one lives and realizes himself: the family, work, apostolic commitments, and spirituality, always creating balance between being and doing;
- *responds* to planning in such a way that uses essential organizational criteria, even if it is adapted at each moment to particular situations and needs;
- *utilizes* all possible resources: meetings, readings, conferences, encounters, life, and apostolic experiences;
- *encourages* relationships with the ecclesial, cultural, social, and economic contexts, helping integrate them into one's vocational choice, personal commitments, and those changeable situations in which one lives; and
- *reinforces* one's identity and vocational fidelity.

In concrete terms, the fundamental objective of the ongoing formation of the Salesian Cooperator consists in rendering him or her capable of living this vocation with maturity and joy, with creative fidelity, and with the ability to renew oneself as a life-long response to the Lord and to His call.

3.2.2. SUBJECTS

The principal responsibility for taking charge of ongoing formation rests, in the first place, with the Salesian Cooperator himself and, in a complementary but necessary manner, with the Association.

The Salesian Cooperator

The primary subject of ongoing formation is the Salesian Cooperator him- or herself and nothing can substitute his or her own personal responsibility and commitment. He or she must personally travel the path of growth and renewal and assume responsibility for his or her own formation in accordance with the *Project of Apostolic Life*. It, in fact, sanctions:

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; dedicate time to reflection and study to deepen Sacred Scripture, the Doctrines of the Church, their knowledge of Don Bosco, and Salesian documents.¹⁰³

This is a commitment which no one can set in motion in the Cooperator's place, but he or she must and can be helped to bring it to conclusion.

In general terms, one can say that the task of rendering his own character more affable rests with the Salesian Cooperator. It is he who must develop his talents, grow in his relational dimension, progress along his path of faith, assimilate and deepen the Salesian charism, solidify a healthy moral sense, perceive the "signs of the times" by recognizing needs and situations of poverty which are close by, and prepare himself conscientiously for a fecund apostolate.

¹⁰³*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 16 §1. 80-81.

Knowing that he is co-responsible for the common mission, he “shares educative and evangelizing co-responsibility in the Association.”¹⁰⁴

The Association

The Association, as such, is also a subject of ongoing formation, inasmuch as it is co-responsible for the formation of its members. In this way it, too, grows in a continuous renewal in fidelity to Don Bosco and in spiritual discernment.

According to the *Regulations of the Project of Apostolic Life*, it falls to the Formator and to others responsible for formation at the different levels to prepare an annual program of ongoing formation and to care for and to follow up on all the specific aspects of formation, in understanding with the Local or Provincial Council and, in particular, with the Delegate(s).¹⁰⁵

3.2.3. PLANNING

The very nature of ongoing formation does not permit an *a priori* or detailed establishment or structuring of its different concepts precisely because it must respond both to the concrete situations of the moment and to those particular situations of each individual Salesian Cooperator (age, environment, life situations, apostolic commitment...), as well as to the emerging situations of the social and ecclesial realities, which are mutable and dependent on time and place.

It is important, however, that the Councils, at the different levels, draw up temporary programs of formation which take into account particular needs and the formative proposals of the Salesian Family and of the Church.

From a functional point of view, it is not possible to imagine that the development of formation should happen in a *linear* manner, as though it is a series of points, one following another, along a ray, and without any repetition. Rather, its development more resembles a spiral which turns and returns upon itself but at an ever deeper level. In the formative process, therefore, the values and the discussions already treated at one time return but, owing to the passage of time, are then considered from a different point of view, at a different depth, or in relationship to other factors which enrich it.

During the phase of ongoing formation, therefore, one does not necessarily go in search of new or particular dimensions of the person. The consideration of the three dimensions (Man, Christian, and Salesian), covered systematically during initial formation, was not exhausted in its possibilities for growth and maturation. Such dimensions will be cultivated, deepened, and strengthened as much as possible, precisely during the phase of ongoing formation.

Ongoing formation cannot be imprisoned within a predetermined and fixed plan; it needs to remain open, flexible, creative, critical, and adaptable to the circumstances of life and people so as to respond to the demands and the possibilities of an adequate formation.

This necessitates that plans be made in accord with criteria which guarantee both the practicality of formation and its unity in diversity. Consequently, and to be consistent with what was said in the first chapter, the preparation, planning, and elaboration of formative topics, commitments, and methodology will:

- give importance and know how to choose and develop adequate thematic content but will not stop at the acquisition of knowledge (*To know*);
- seek to put the Salesian Cooperator in the dynamic of living and of *knowing how to experience*, i.e., *put into practice*, what he has come to know, in such a way as to help him or

¹⁰⁴*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 22 §1. 42.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.* Regulations, Article 22 §4. 93. and 26 §4. 100.

her make decisions and assume the commitments which necessitate turning the topics of study into life and action;

- take care to characterize the human, Christian, and Salesian identity of the Cooperator by proposing and developing values, motivations, and attitudes which configure his mature personality;
- put into play a person's capacity for dialogue and for participation in the life of the civic, Christian, and Salesian communities. These are places for a rich experience of communion. The Christian and Salesian spirit and apostolic charity are capable of evoking such communion.

Taken together, then, these guidelines, criteria, and motivations which involve the carrying forward of the phases of formation, whether by the Association or the individual Salesian Cooperator, will enable all to find the light and the strength that sustain said task of formation and which spring from the joy of wanting to be better for the good of all. Thus, ongoing formation becomes an expression of esteem for and fidelity to the joyous vocation of the Salesian Cooperator.

CHAPTER 4. FORMATION TO THE SERVICE OF LEADERSHIP IN ANIMATION AND IN GOVERNANCE

The service of animation and of leadership in the Association is clearly and explicitly indicated in the *Project of Apostolic Life* as a particular and important apostolate of the Salesian Cooperator.

Its fundamental purpose is that of making the Association grow and mature:

- in communion;
- in the spiritual life; and
- in the Salesian mission.¹⁰⁶

This objective becomes concrete when each member of the Association is accompanied along his path of growth in these three areas so that he can always be more conformed to the identity traced out by the *Project of Apostolic Life*. The importance of the formation of the leaders as one of the fundamental areas of formation, together with initial and ongoing, is easily seen from this fact and springs from it. It is important:

– *for the person himself*. In order to carry out his leadership responsibility with competence, the Salesian Cooperator needs a continuous formation. When taking on a role of responsibility, he takes upon himself the life of others. This is a fundamental characteristic of an adult and for which reason this formation is an important part of the process of personal maturation lasting for one's whole life;¹⁰⁷

– *for the service he must render*. The *Project of Apostolic Life* establishes that those who are in leadership roles within the Association must help the Salesian Cooperators in their formation with adequate activities and initiatives. Therefore, in order to render a service more worthy of its name, those who are responsible for animation and governance must understand the importance of preparing themselves for this task through a continual personal process of maturation in the faith and of configuration to Christ, according to the will of the Father and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and

– *for the realization of the mission*. Carrying out the mission requires persons who have been formed and are capable of responding to the needs of today. Consequently, the commitment to a solid formation, in view of the service which one must give, is the primary task for one in the position of responsibility and a matter of conscience. Such preparation can neither be underestimated nor improvised.

4.1. CRITERIA FOR FORMATION OF LEADERS

It is possible to list some general criteria which must characterize the specific formation of the leaders.

4.1.1. UNITY IN BEING AND ACTING

The Christian is called to live his entire existence and his daily experience in unity.

The expression often used in the Salesian world today to describe this is: "apostolic interiority." Dualisms and dichotomies are verified when one is superficial (lacking in interiority) or is taken by ceaseless activity, as in activism (lacking in an authentic sense of apostolate).

Between the two realities of being a member of the Church and a citizen of the world, the leader is not called to choose either one or the other of the two to the exclusion of the one not chosen. Rather, it is his task to make the two converge and to unify all his personal forces. Formation happens in the

¹⁰⁶See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 17 §1. 82.
Ibid. Statutes, Article 11. 33-34.

¹⁰⁷See *ibid.* Article 9 §1. 31-32.

continual interaction between being and doing, reflecting and acting, and carries with it a dynamism, an action, a methodology, and a solicitude which encompass his whole life and which move into self-formation by means of reflection on what one lives and experiences.

4.1.2. STYLE OF ANIMATION

Whoever offers himself to the service of leadership is aware that communion, autonomy, and collegiality define the original identity of the Association within the Salesian Family, and, consequently, feels called to promote these at all levels.

4.1.3. SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE ASSOCIATION.

The formation of leaders must uphold a lively sense of belonging to the Association and must value the bonds of fraternity so as to learn to coordinate initiatives, experiences, and plans which care for the development of one's sensitivity and feeling of belonging to the different levels (Local, Provincial, Regional, and World). Such a formation will make the understanding grow within the Salesian Cooperator that he belongs to a reality which is very great (that of the Association) and which Don Bosco had "thought" of as being of a world-wide dimension, at the service of the family, of the Church, of the Salesian Family, and of civic society.

4.1.4. VALUING AND APPRECIATING CO-RESPONSIBILITY

The Salesian Cooperator who cares for the service of animation and governance is neither the one who does, thinks, controls, or substitutes everyone else nor does he impose his ideas or his will. His task is that of helping the others to carry forward the vision and mission of the Association at all levels.

4.1.5. COMPETENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

Today, being qualified is the criterion of development and success in all fields. The good is to be done well. It is not enough to work in any old way. All objectives must be reached through planned initiatives: this implies a constant attitude of discernment and synergy, of verification, of availability and willingness to update oneself and to grow according to the demands of the times and of one's own apostolic commitment.

4.1.6. PRIOR FORMATION

Openness to the service of animation and leadership must begin already during initial formation because each Salesian Cooperator must feel himself responsible for the common mission. This does not signify that they will receive a formation that explains or teaches how carry out specific tasks inherent to one's specific leadership role; rather, it is a formation which seeks to help the Cooperator mature an attitude of co-responsibility which is concrete and which is open to service. This is so because each and every Salesian Cooperator might be asked to offer, for a determinate amount of time, his or her own energies and abilities for the service of animation and leadership.¹⁰⁸

4.1.7. CHARISMATIC PRESENCE

The purpose of this specific formation is to help the leaders live their apostolic service in a positive, joyful, and Salesian manner. This carries with it credibility, knowing how to instill trust, perseverance, caring for relationships, and the growth of and interest in all the members of the Association.

¹⁰⁸See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 17 §1. 82. and 22 §1. 91-92.

4.2. TIMES AND RESOURCES

The practical formation of leaders begins with their nomination and happens during the fulfillment of their role. The condition necessary to be able to carry out one's service of responsibility, in fact, is not that he or she be already ready for it but, rather, that of having freely and generously accepted to put one's personal gifts and a little of one's own time and energies at the service of the growth of the Association. Therefore, no prior formation path exists before the assumption of a role of service (such a thing can lead to the risk of becoming a "career leader" on the part of those who are called; and, conversely, can also lead to the risk that there is a "de-responsibilization" on the part of others) because "[T]he Salesian Cooperators welcome with availability the time of leadership service requested of them, live it with discernment and synergy, and deepen the specific formation which is necessary to qualify them for their task according to the established programs of the Association."¹⁰⁹

Therefore, it is possible to state that a leader is formed *by being a leader*, in the exercise of his mandate, with a continual interaction between action and reflection. If the action is naturally included in the specific tasks to be carried out, reflection and deepening are aided by paying attention and through certain initiatives; therefore, the leader will:

- seek to dedicate some time to deepening knowledge of topics and aspects inherent to his or her responsibility (self-formation);
- participate in formation days organized for those who are entrusted with leadership roles in the different sectors of animation and at the different levels;
- see to it that at the beginning of the mandate of a new Council there is opportune time reserved for this in-depth learning; and
- be present at meetings and gatherings promoted by ecclesial bodies which treat of a more efficient service of animation to the Associations of the lay Faithful.

4.3. INDICATED ACTIONS

The formation of leaders encompasses guidelines concerning the different specific tasks to be carried out, including the acquisition of necessary and useful techniques. However, the most important thing is formation to the sense of responsibility. In fact, the growth of the Salesian Cooperators entrusted to the leader and the development of the Association depend upon him or her.

Leadership formation becomes concrete by putting its specific and characteristic elements in relationship with the three *dimensions* and the four *pillars* of the formative experience which underlie all the guidelines indicated in this document. While not losing sight of this general framework, some particular points concerning the formation of leaders will be highlighted here:

4.3.1. HUMAN DIMENSION

To Know

- to be aware of one's own resources so as to strengthen and to develop those qualities which one must possess as a leader;
- to learn some strategies to handle in a positive manner the stress, conflicts, and tensions which one lives in carrying out the service of animation and governance; and
- to understand the motivations and know the daily life of each and every Salesian Cooperator entrusted to him or her so as to help that Cooperator give one's best in all areas.

¹⁰⁹ *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Regulations, Article 17 §2. 82.

To Know How to Do

- to develop one's personal and professional competencies and their theoretical base by means of a continuous and complementary formation;
- to plan and schedule all the initiatives of the life of the Association;
- to know how to animate and guide a group towards the most opportune objectives; and
- to use the different instruments of communication so as to be able to communicate at various levels.

To Know How to Be

- to grow in one's self-esteem in such a way as not to put oneself in competition with others and to know how to value the gifts of each person. Leaders, in fact, work for the growth of their brothers and sisters by helping each one discover the gifts that he or she has received from God and to join these gifts with the gifts of others to realize a common and shared project;
- to cultivate the *sense of responsibility*: the understanding and knowledge of the task which has been entrusted to a person, in addition to availability and generosity in carrying it out;
- to know how to be authoritative in the exercise of one's mandates but, at the same time, humble and open to self-criticism, constructive criticism, listening, and change; and
- to assume responsibility for one's own actions and for the decisions which one takes within the Association of the Salesian Cooperators so as to be able to motivate them on the basis of the demands of the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

To Know How to Live in Communion

- to be capable of living communion and dialogue, even in difficult situations;
- to value and foster teamwork; and
- to have the skills necessary to promote the birth of a group and to know the dynamics of animating it in communion.

4.3.2. CHRISTIAN DIMENSION

To Know

- to deepen one's knowledge and understanding of the different Bible texts which present authority as service to the community; and
- to update one's knowledge of doctrinal, ecclesial, and moral content, so as to grasp their "newness." This is important if one wishes to help the Centers not to "stay at the window" while a new world is being born. Of particular importance is the study of the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church. (Translator's note: the "staying at the window" is an allusion to John XXIII and his convocation of Vatican Council II)

To Know How to Do

- to accompany the processes of the new evangelization within the Center and the Province; and
- to learn how to foster the art of discernment at all levels.

To Know How to Be

- to mature in one's understanding of being “called to take on particular responsibilities”¹¹⁰ and, thereby, experiencing the joy of carrying out with fidelity and with the Gospel spirit of service all that one is responsible for – not for vainglory but for the common good.

To Know How to Live in Communion

- to establish relationships of reciprocal trust and collaboration with the Bishops and the living forces of the Church, giving privilege of place to the persons, groups, and forces which are apropos to one's specific mission.

4.3.3. SALESIAN DIMENSION

To Know

- to deepen one's knowledge and understanding of Salesian spirituality (a vital knowledge of Don Bosco), of the Salesian Family, and of the history and the life of the Association of Salesian Cooperators – both at the World and Local Levels; and
- to understand and interiorize the *Project of Apostolic Life* and its accompanying Commentary, especially as to what regards the organization and the sense of belonging to the Association.

To Know How to Do

- to help the Salesian Cooperators grow in the idea of the Association's autonomy. The leader matures in himself, and helps the Association mature, a healthy and respectful autonomy while ever being in communion with the Salesian Family;
- to work ordinarily in a group, always with the constant concern to know the members personally and to share in a fraternal manner in each one's joys, sorrows and pains, and just aspirations; and
- to draw up a schedule for and to organize timely verifications. This will bring all to a deeper, more conscious, and more convinced planning and will give greater consistency and strength to the proposals.

To Know How to Be

- to mature an authentic spirit of service so that co-responsibility in the mission may translate into a co-responsibility in action, “within the Association, at whatever level, carry[ing] out said roles in a spirit of service, according to the principles of communion, co-responsibility, synergy, and cooperation.”¹¹¹; and
- to know how to return to the ordinary life of the Association. Leaders “[A]t the end of their period of service [they] give witness to their belonging with attitudes of simplicity and availability for the Association.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰*Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 22 §1. 42.

¹¹¹*Ibid.* Regulations, Article 7 §1. 70.

¹¹²*Ibid.* Article 17 §2. 82.

To Know How to Live in Communion

- to lead, in *the style which is called “animation”*, which means:
 - to care more for the formation of persons than the simple functioning of structures;
 - to accompany vocational processes more than organizational aspects;
 - to put the focus on quality rather than on quantity of initiatives;
 - to open up to meet life and culture head on rather than to close the Association in reassuring isolation;
 - to help a strong sense of collegiality grow;¹¹³ and
 - to foster sharing, in autonomy, and in respect for the roles of each one.
- to interact with and participate on the Local Salesian Family Commissions and Consultae at the various levels,¹¹⁴ and with the other animating bodies and the representatives of other groups of the Local Church¹¹⁵.

¹¹³See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 36 §2. 54. and 37 §4. 55.

¹¹⁴See *ibid.* Regulations, Article 22 §1. 91. and 26 §1. 98-99.

¹¹⁵See *ibid.* Article 10. 73-74.

CHAPTER 5. FORMATION OF THE FORMATORS

Of particular importance is the formation of those to whom the responsibility for formation has been entrusted so as to guarantee the very identity of the Association. Some Cooperators, in fact, are specifically delegated to this important task.

In the area of the *plan of ongoing formation*, the Association has the task of promoting some initiatives directed to the formation of the Formators in such a way as to be able to have the greatest number possible of *experts* to accompany their brothers and sisters in their growth process. The handing on of *knowledge and experience*, in fact, contributes to help the man, the Christian, and the Salesian mature in his *educational competency*, necessary for the carrying out of so delicate a task.

Generally, the organization and realization of courses for formation for the Formators is the responsibility of the Provincial Council together with the Regional Consulta,¹¹⁶ but Local initiatives can also take place as a response to particular needs or demands.

In remaining faithful to the comprehensive general framework of this document, here are highlighted only *some* of the specific elements for the formation of Formators:

5.1. HUMAN DIMENSION

5.1.1. TO KNOW

The role of the Formator requires, before all else, wisdom and common sense. This does not take away the fact that there is certain specific knowledge, above all in the area of the *sciences of formation*, which can enrich reflection on the formative experience. The knowledge of some simple elements of psychology, also, and, in particular, the branch that deals with relationships can better the relational dynamics in leading groups and in one's understanding of relationships with individuals.

Another important element is represented by a good knowledge of the development and deepening of matters concerning society in addition to good knowledge of the area in which one lives and of other *educational agencies* which network, especially within the Salesian Family.

5.1.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

As regards the area of *skills and abilities*, it is certainly useful to have the skills required to use the different methodologies and teaching techniques which are necessary for the presentation and the development of formative topics. Moreover, it is useful that the Formator know and understand how to use some of the techniques of group animation. He or she must know how to listen, be creative, have an intuitive sense and the ability to respond adequately to the challenges of the environment and of the different situations and needs of each individual Cooperator under his or her care.

5.1.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

The responsibility which is entrusted to the Formator implies that he or she be a person who is ready to do what is necessary to make him- or herself qualified in view of the service which he or she must give. This requires an attitude of self-formation and of growing in self-knowledge.

Moreover, the Formator must be a person who is capable of mental self-control and who knows himself so that he may avoid the temptations, which are at times involuntary, of self-affirmation or of strongly individualistic tendencies. He or she is endowed with a spirit of service and of apostolic charity.

¹¹⁶See *Project of Apostolic Life: Statutes and Regulations*. Statutes, Article 29. 48.
Ibid. Regulations, Article 26 §4. 100.

5.1.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

The Formator must be capable of interacting with others, avoiding every kind of paternalism/maternalism and putting in effort to live in mutual exchange with those whom he is forming. For this reason, he or she must be a person who is capable of communication: listening and dialogue.

5.2. CHRISTIAN DIMENSION

5.2.1. TO KNOW

An adequate knowledge of Sacred Scripture is an important resource which supports the experience of the Formator. Moreover, he feels the need to follow attentively and to deepen his knowledge of the Magisterium of the Church, of the Holy Father, and of the Bishops. Attention to the Magisterium, in fact, constitutes the master road for all Christian formation.

5.2.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

So that formation be efficacious and fruitful, it is necessary for it be interiorized. To this end, the Formator will take care to contribute to foster authentic and profound motivations which are adequate to this specific vocation.

From this point of view, the experience of formation is able to reach the point of becoming a true personal *accompaniment*. Therefore, it would be very useful that the Formator know in both a theoretical and experiential way the art of *spiritual discernment*.

5.2.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

The Formator feels the need to meditate frequently on the Word of God and to live in profound Sacramental union with the Lord Jesus. He or she is a person with a profound interior maturity who knows how to hand on to others his taste and enthusiasm for an authentic spiritual life.

The Formator is a faithful person who does not limit him- or herself to “teaching” but knows how to give witness – with his or her life, before all else – to his or her faith and choice for the Kingdom.

5.2.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

The task of formation can be seen from the logic of knowing how to share spiritual goods. This requires on the part of the Formator the ability to promote collaboration with other ecclesial bodies, in addition to humanitarian and youth-oriented civic organizations.

5.3. SALESIAN DIMENSION

5.3.1. TO KNOW

A good knowledge of the history, pedagogy, and spirituality of Don Bosco must characterize the figure of a Formator. This knowledge must be assimilated in an existential way and not only on the level of scholastic content. He knows in-depth, as a whole and in individual sections, the *Project of Apostolic Life*, its official Commentary, and the documents on formation.

5.3.2. TO KNOW HOW TO DO

The Formator knows how to relate well with the Aspirants according to the Salesian style and method which can be called the “Method of the Good Shepherd”; this means that he or she learns how to walk beside his or her brothers and sisters in formation, offering them the help they need, beginning with closeness, understanding, and love.

His is the task to learn how to animate the life of his group in Salesian style.

5.3.3. TO KNOW HOW TO BE

The Formator knows how to witness to his Salesian vocational choice and to his lived fidelity. He or she is a person who is fully integrated into the Association and who knows how to hand on a lively sentiment of belonging.

It is important that he or she have the gifts of some characteristic charismatic virtues: dynamism, the ability to communicate joy and optimism, a spirit of prayer, love for the Sacraments, devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and the grace of unity that allows one to be a contemplative in action according to Don Bosco's spirit.

5.3.4. TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION

The Formator knows that the Salesian Cooperators are called to give a fraternal, respectful, affable, and joyful character to their personal relationships. It will be his or her responsibility, therefore, to take care to guarantee that the style chosen for meetings and for other community formation gatherings is marked by Don Bosco's spirit.

This requires from the Formator the will to know personally everyone entrusted to his or her care by taking interest in their problems and sharing in their moments of joy and of suffering.

CONCLUSION

Formation is an art and a dynamic process that lasts for one's entire life. This is the reason why these *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of the Salesian Cooperators* are more a stimulus, a point of departure, and a resource than the precise definition of a process.

To be a Salesian Cooperator means to be aware of one's own Christian and Salesian vocation in today's world, which equates to:

- *committing oneself* to evangelize culture and social life;
- *collaborating* in the building of the Kingdom of God there where one lives: in the family, at one's place of work, among one's friends;
- *being* always available to "go out of oneself" to meet others - above all, to meet poor boys and girls and young people so as to realize one's task of saving souls using the pedagogy of goodness – a charismatic element of Don Bosco's spiritual and apostolic experience.

These formation guidelines which the Association offers are the fruit of a slow *iter* of dialogue, research, and reflection. They intend to present a more unified and holistic formative process in a language that is more comprehensible and up-to-date so as to guarantee that all can read them and put them into practice. They are certainly not exhaustive, but each Region, Province, and Local Center must seek the way to incarnate them in the different contexts that exist, keeping in mind their unique reality.

The spread of the Association across the various continents, in fact, has given origin to rather rich and dynamic situations, colored by the cultural reality in which one is immersed. Nonetheless, the charism is still the same and must be conserved and made fruitful through a strong sense of belonging and of co-responsibility marked by joy and gratitude for the precious heritage received as a gift from the Holy Spirit and Don Bosco.

It is for this reason that the pages of this document need to be adapted to each environment so that they might touch each Cooperator's life in a concrete manner.

The Association of Salesian Cooperators entrusts this formative path to Don Bosco in this the bicentenary year of his birth, invoking, upon each one of its members and through his intercession, the Grace to live one's Salesian vocation with passion. May the perennial entrustment to Mary Help of Christians, Mother and Teacher, contribute to rendering the task to be *signs and bearers of God's love* ever more felt and concrete – in all the places where Don Bosco's message and the Salesian vocation are incarnate, so as to be the leaven of hope and of love for the men, women, and children of our time.

APPENDICES

ATTACHMENT NO. 1: Some Content and Actions for Initial Formation

*What follows is meant to be only an **indication** of some fundamental material for the formation path of the Aspirant. It is neither an outline to follow nor is it exhaustive or prescriptive. It is meant to help the Formator understand what is meant by formation today.*

HUMAN DIMENSION			
	INITIATION	DEEPENING	DECISION
TO KNOW	Recognize those elements which are fundamental to the dignity of the human person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define those human qualities which are necessary to live the Salesian vocation - Know the political, social, economic, and cultural realities in which one lives 	Understand the importance of having a Personal Plan of Life
TO KNOW HOW TO DO	Direct one's being and doing according to ethical values	Promote human rights at all levels	Formulate one's own Personal Plan of Life, in the light of the <i>Project of Apostolic Life</i>
TO KNOW HOW TO BE	Become aware of and give value to one's own personhood	Converge and integrate, beginning with one's own vocation, all the different aspects of daily life	Grow in affective equilibrium, in courage, and in the ability to make lasting and stable choices
TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION	Value the presence and the differences of the other as a richness in one's own personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put oneself in relation to others with respect, confidence, empathy, and welcome - Consider <i>teamwork</i> a fundamental modality for the apostolic commitment and community life of the Association 	Become more aware of one's own limits and grow in the ability to handle conflicts in a positive manner

SOME FUNDAMENTAL TOPICS RELATED TO THE HUMAN DIMENSION

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The dignity of man because he is the image and likeness of God 2. A person's ethical value 3. The formation of a person's conscience 4. The meaning of life | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. A social being 6. Openness to transcendence 7. Human Rights 8. How to construct one's <i>Personal Plan of Life</i> |
|---|--|

CHRISTIAN DIMENSION			
	INITIATION	DEEPENING	DECISION
TO KNOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know the stories and the teachings of the Bible - Know the Catechism of the Catholic Church as the doctrinal and vital summary of the Christian Faith - Put into focus the implications which derive from being a committed Christian as a lay person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarify what living as a Baptized person implies - Identify the signs of a lay vocation and mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen oneself in the awareness of the importance of studying the Bible and theology for one's personal spiritual growth - Know the foundational documents of the Magisterium of the Church, especially <i>Christi-fideles Laici</i>
TO KNOW HOW TO DO	Illumine one's own actions in the light of the Christian Faith	Interiorize that which unity between Faith and life means "in the everyday"	Develop one's own talents for the service of others
TO KNOW HOW TO BE	Assume the consequences of living one's Christian commitments in today's world	Value the Beatitudes as a vital process for configuration to Christ	Grow along the path to maturity in the Christian life to a coherent synthesis of Faith and life
TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION	Live one's faith experience within the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know that one is a living part of the Church - Reinforce unity in one's family as Domestic Church 	Build up the Church in the diverse realities in which we live

SOME FUNDAMENTAL TOPICS RELATED TO THE CHRISTIAN DIMENSION

1. The vocation of the person
 - a. The Sacraments in the Church
 - i. Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist): a new dignity
 - ii. Healing (Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick): support along the way
 - iii. Christian vocation (Matrimony, Holy Orders): giving on oneself
 - b. The *sequela Christi* today
 - c. The various states in Christian life (Lay, Religious, Clerical)
2. The vocation and the mission of the laity
3. The Church: People of God, Body of Christ
4. The Christian and the family
5. The work of the Christian laity
6. The Christian in his area, in the socio-political reality, and in the Local Church

SALESIAN DIMENSION			
	INITIATION	DEEPENING	DECISION
TO KNOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know the figure of Don Bosco: his times; his Priestly mission; his mission as educator and evangelizer; his identity as Founder - Identify the fundamental elements of the vocation of the Salesian Cooperator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know the basics about the different Groups which comprise the Salesian Family and know well the <i>Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family</i> - Identify the challenges of education today - Know the Preventive System as educational method and spirituality - Know the reality of the young in one's own area - Know the <i>Project of Apostolic Life</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know the annual <i>Strenna</i> of the Rector Major - Know the history of the Association - Know the tasks which regard the Association at higher levels: Province, Region, World
TO KNOW HOW TO DO	Fortify personal skills and abilities in function of the Salesian charism	Plan one's own apostolate in the light of the Preventive System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquire the skills and abilities necessary to one's own mission - Respond with creativity to the demands of the young of today - Spread the devotion to Mary Help of Christians
TO KNOW HOW TO BE	Interiorize the virtues of Don Bosco so as to assimilate his spirituality gradually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Value and appreciate the richness of being part of Salesian Family - Take on the attitudes and the values which characterize the Salesian spirit: joy, optimism, and creativity - Cultivate a devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Saints of the Salesian Family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take on the lifestyle of the Salesian Cooperator "in the everyday" according to the indications of the <i>Project of Apostolic Life</i> - Choose an apostolic commitment and Salesian work with generosity - Live the sense of belonging to and of co-responsibility within the Association
TO KNOW HOW TO LIVE IN COMMUNION	Become aware of the importance of the Local Center in the life of the Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate oneself into the Local Center and appreciate it as a place for growth - Participate in the moments of formation, spirituality, and celebration offered by the Association and by the Salesian Family of one's area 	Participate actively in the life of the Province and of the Local Center

SOME FUNDAMENTAL TOPICS RELATED TO THE SALESIAN DIMENSION

THE FIGURE OF DON BOSCO

1. His times: his life as response to a call
2. Educator and evangelizer of the young
3. Don Bosco with God
4. Man of the Church
5. Founder
6. His apostolic preference: the young

THE MISSION OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR

1. The vocation of the Salesian Cooperator
2. A specific lay vocation
3. Called to a mission
4. The challenge of education today
5. Goals of the educational process
 - a. an ever-new and original synthesis
 - b. the educational environment
 - c. the various types of apostolate within the area of education
6. Don Bosco's choice: to prevent (Preventive System):
 - a. its actuality today
 - b. its characteristics
 - i. reason
 - ii. Religion
 - iii. loving-kindness
7. The Salesian Cooperator's commitment in the human, social, and political realities
 - a. apostolic needs of the area
 - b. animator of the Family Pastoral
 - c. the family: the place of education and of evangelization
 - d. an apostolate typically Salesian
 - e. youth, the age of changes and of choices

- f. the marginalization of youth and the risks
- g. the formative apostolate
- h. the apostle in the "everyday"

BELONGING TO THE ASSOCIATION

1. A public Association of the Faithful in the Church
2. The history of the Association
3. To become a Salesian Cooperator
4. Brothers and sisters in Christ with the spirit of Don Bosco
5. Co-responsibility in spiritual and apostolic growth
6. The different levels of organization
7. Sense of belonging and solidarity
8. Ministries and service of communion
9. The *Promise*
10. To be a Salesian Cooperator, a choice for one's entire life

THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY

1. The Salesian Family
2. Participation and communion in the Salesian Family
3. The Salesian Spirit in the light of the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*
4. Apostle in the Salesian Family
 - a. co-responsible in the mission
 - b. the educational character of a Salesian

ATTACHMENT NO. 2: The Accompaniment Portfolio for the Aspirant

This is a tool composed of some charts and forms created for the purpose of facilitating the task of personal and group accompaniment. [Translator's note: sample forms in English for this and much more, including biographical data and financial forms, can be found in the Appendix to the *Handbook* for St. Philip the Apostle Province on the Cooperator website for the Interamerica Region, <http://scinteramerica.org/en>, as well as on <https://DonBoscoSalesianPortal.org> under the heading "SSCC", with future posting to the official international website of the Association]

It is an aid for this open-ended work, giving not only the possibility for annotation of the essential aspects of the Aspirant's evolution but also for completing it with other materials which make possible accompaniment on the part of the Local Center.

What follows is a list indicating the parts or the documents that the portfolio may contain:

1. *Personal Data*

This is a brief form on which are found the Aspirant's essential data (name, address, telephone number, etc.).

2. *Initial Evaluation of the Aspirant*

This is a form which will permit one to come to know the starting point of each Aspirant at the beginning of his or her formation. It covers at least four essential points:

- the itinerary of his faith formation up to that moment;
- how he came to know of the specific vocation of the Salesian Cooperator;
- what has motivated him or her to seek to initiate formation; and
- the pastoral areas in which he or she is active.

3. *Annual Reports of the Formator*

To make it easier to monitor the evolution of the Aspirant during the course of formation, the Formator may prepare a report which reflects this evolution and the path followed by the Aspirant during the course of the year. Such a report will be presented to the Local Council in the way which is considered most appropriate.

The purpose of this report is precisely that of rendering it easier for the Local Council of each Center to accompany the Aspirants. It does not need to be a lengthy report but still must be drawn up with sufficient care so as to cover the specific objectives of formative accompaniment.

4. *The Aspirant's Self-Evaluation*

This document is the fruit of the verification which the Aspirant him or herself makes periodically on the path of vocational growth taken, in the light of the goals, the Indicated Actions, and his or her Personal Plan of Life.

It is useful for the Aspirant to share this process of self-evaluation with both the Formator and the group.

ATTACHMENT NO. 3: A Help to Make Your Personal Plan of Life

Beginning with the understanding that the *Project of Apostolic Life* occupies a privileged place in the life of the Association and also in your own personal life, it is important for you to assume responsibility for your own formation by committing yourself to a constant path of conversion and renewal. Therefore, draw up your Personal Plan of Life by taking your own experience and concrete situation as your starting points.

Pay special attention to some elements when doing so:

- verification of your maturation as a human being, a Christian, and a Salesian, thanks to processes of self-evaluation and of confrontation with the Word of God;
- knowledge and practice of the spirituality of the *Preventive System*, which is the source of new relationships in the fraternal life;
- progressive maturation in the charismatic Salesian identity;
- active and cordial presence in the ordinary meetings and also in the extraordinary ones which mark the life of the center; and
- openness to others and willingness to share.

Why make a Personal Plan of Life?

“Taking on a specific way of living the Gospel” (*Statutes*, Article 2) means for the Salesian Cooperators to know and to live out the *Project of Apostolic Life* in their life. Making a personal plan means putting oneself at the beginning of a process of welcoming the plan which God has on you for, in this way, His plan becomes your plan. Making one does not serve, principally, as a search for your own realization, but as a welcoming of your vocation, a concretization of the gift of yourself, and the assumption of responsibility for your choices. For this reason, it is very useful to write it down so that you will be able to verify it along the course of your path of growth.

Before beginning to write your plan, you must be motivated.

Our life is always under construction and certainly God has a plan for you. He says also to you: “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb.” (Jer. 1:5) Today you are seeking to discover and to realize your vocation as a Salesian Cooperator, whether as a layperson or Priest. In order to be able to welcome the gift of this call, He gives you the grace of this time of formation. Formation, in fact, is a time of identification with the Salesian vocation and mission.

The plan helps you to do this: you seek the path which God has traced out for you; you discover what He wants of you; and you project your life into the future, thinking about how God wishes it to be.

This vision of your future, which you received as a fruit of discernment, gives direction to your life. When you know the point of arrival, it is easier to make all the elements of your daily existence converge – aspirations, energies, and values – towards the achievement of the goal. In Don Bosco, the gifts of nature and of grace are fused into a plan of life which is strongly unified: service to the young.

Therefore, do not permit your life to be fragmented, dispersed, or dragged by the current! Sanctity must be planned.

In this way, your life will become more unified. You will become capable of soldering the past, the present, and the future into one meaningful whole according to your fundamental choice. The personal plan is exactly the right tool to help you walk towards this unification.

Along this path will be able to verify some aspects of the way you are living. You will begin to know yourself more clearly – both your virtues and your limitations. You will become aware of what needs to change if you wish to realize that vision of your life in obedience to God’s call. You will become ever more convinced of the necessity and even of the beauty of this new configuration that you wish to give to your existence. You will feel moved to make every effort for your conversion, for working on yourself, and for making difficult decisions, precisely to assure the realization of that identity which attracts you and which promises you joy and satisfaction. Thus, the plan will become for you a means of conversion and of renewal and will bring you to a greater authenticity and fidelity.

This precious tool, therefore, permits you to take your life in your hands, to assume personal responsibility for your vocation and mission, and to follow a path of growth towards sanctity – as a fruitful gift of yourself and of the gifts which you have received.

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