

Art. 12. Structures and Ways in Which They Work

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

§2. *Normally, the activities of Salesian Cooperators take place, in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation, in structures where secular circumstances offer them greater possibilities of meaningful involvement: civic, cultural, socio-economic, political, ecclesial, and Salesian.¹*

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

CONSIDERATIONS

Core theme

Structures as Growth and Expansion of the Charism

Keys to Understanding

A. Apostolic action must adapt itself if it is to be adequate for the actual social, cultural, political, and religious structures of its time for these are both differentiated and structured. In the case to the contrary, it risks being ineffectual and void of influence. In this area concerning structures, the secular character of the lay Salesian Cooperator offers ample possibilities for involvement and, therefore, for incarnating the Christian message and service within the living fabric of the human and ecclesial reality.

The article takes into consideration civic, ecclesial, and Salesian structures. The comments made about activities are valid also for these structures: the insertion of the individual Salesian Cooperator into one or another of these will depend, among other things, on a person's availability, willingness, and preparation. The text names the following structures:

- a) *civic*: Federal, State, Provincial, Regional, and Municipal Councils and Meetings, Parliaments, Senates, and Houses of Representatives; Neighborhood Associations; and various types of public and private associations which exist to guarantee and promote civic values and goods;
- b) *cultural*: schools of every level and type, printing houses, centers of production and of diffusion of radio and TV programs, and clubs or cultural circles;
- c) *socio-economic*: industrial, commercial, medical, and welfare structures; and
- d) *political*: Parties, Unions, Special Interest Groups, Worker and Teacher Associations, etc.

N.B. Involvement of the Salesian Cooperator in such structures cannot prescind from the requirements of the Salesian mission and spirit.

¹ Eugenio Ceria, SDB. *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*. Trans. Vincent Zuliani, SDB. Vol. XVII. (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 2002) 10-11. Print.
Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition. Can. 305.
Christifideles Laici. Par. 42.

B. A useful indication concerning the type of involvement of the Salesian Cooperator in the ecclesial structures is that of offering responsible collaboration *to the Bishops and Parish Priests*. This underlines the new type of relationship between the lay Faithful and the Clergy promoted by Vatican Council II. It is a relationship which is no longer between an *active* subject (the Pastor) and a *passive* and solely receptive subject (the Faithful) but it is a relationship of co-responsibility between *two active subjects*, while recognizing the differences in ministries and roles.

C. The Association encourages groups of Salesian Cooperators, who are suited and willing, to give life to new works and to undertake them even on their own initiative where the local needs suggest their usefulness. This is in full harmony with the guidelines of the Vatican Council II Decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, which recognizes in the lay Faithful the responsibility to be able to undertake apostolic initiatives and, further, suggests to the Pastors to foster and support them in these initiatives, leaving them that proper freedom required by the dignity that is theirs as children of God and as secular apostles.

References

Atti del Capitolo Generale 21 nn. 69-75, 79, 140.

Atti del Capitolo Generale Speciale nn. 735, 736, 744.

Costituzioni. SDB 1984 art. 40.

Midali M., *Nella Chiesa e nella società con Don Bosco oggi*, Elle Di Ci, Torino 1974.

from the *Regulations to the Project of Apostolic Life*

Art. 4 Structures in Which They Work

Salesian Cooperators promote the launching and functioning of works of the Association, becoming active in the areas in which they live; in a particular way:

- in civic, cultural, intercultural, socioeconomic, and political arenas: paying attention to the education of the young, human rights, and the life of the family;
- in ecclesial environments: offering their personal collaboration, in synergy and with responsibility, to their bishops and parish priests, especially in the parish communities and in the animating bodies of the diocese;
- in places animated by the Salesian Society, by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, or by other Groups of the Salesian Family;
- in works run by other Religious Communities and ecclesial movements.

Art. 5 Works Run Directly by the Association or by Members of the Association

§1. Salesian Cooperators can live out their apostolic commitment in works run either directly by the Association or by its members. Such works must express the Salesian spirit and charism, in both their characteristics and goals, according to what is defined in the respective statutes.

§2. The responsibility for running the work will rest directly with the Local Center if it is a work promoted by the Association, or with those members who have undertaken its administration, without involving, in such a case, any responsibility on the part of the higher levels of the same Association.

The Association can take the steps necessary to be recognized as a civic nonprofit organization in those places in which they consider it opportune.

from The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco

The meeting of cooperators had been postponed until February 19th, and was held at the Church of St. John the Evangelist by Father John Cagliero. Don Bosco did not go there because of his health condition. The cardinal presided and also wished to address the meeting, delivering a highly important talk in which he publicly justified his affection for the Salesian Congregation and explained how it was nourished by the spirit of the Gospel, namely by the spirit of Jesus Christ."

These meetings of cooperators were held in several parts of Italy, but we will only refer to the meeting held in Padua that was due in great part to the zeal of Countess Bonmartini." The meeting took place on January 20th in the Church of St. Francis. The youthful choir from the School of Este performed some fine music. Father Peter Pozzan, who had been sent there especially by Don Bosco, addressed the meeting. The bishop of Padua, Bishop Callegari, honored the pious gathering with his presence and delivered some very apt and proper words that described Don Bosco as a man of God and a man of Divine Providence. But he spoke mainly of the cooperators themselves. "They do not exist solely for the houses of Don Bosco," he said, "but for the welfare of the universal Church, and especially for the welfare of the respective dioceses, since they are just so many arms working on behalf of the bishops and the pastors." He then took up the objection that was occasionally raised. "The houses of Don Bosco are so warmly recommended to us, some people say, 'but have we not other works that need to be initiated and supported?'

The bishop replied that by helping Don Bosco's houses, one was helping the entire Church, for Don Bosco did not limit his activity to Turin alone, but aimed at helping the whole of youth and at restoring Christianity in society. Then the bishop urged both the clergy and the lay population to join the Salesian cooperators, saying that he regarded the growth of the association in his diocese as a blessing from Heaven.

After hearing a report on this talk, Don Bosco was so delighted that in talking with Father Lemoyne about the cooperators on February 16th, he voiced his satisfaction. "I reflected at great length on how to found the Salesian cooperators," he told him. "Their real, essential purpose is not that of helping the Salesians, but of helping the Church, the bishops and the pastors in their works of charity under the overall direction of the Salesians, in works such as catechism instruction, the education of poor children and so on. Their assistance to the Salesians is nothing more than assistance to one of the many good works done

within the Catholic Church. It is true that we address appeals to them to help our own needs, but the cooperators are instruments in the hands of the bishops. The only person who, so far, has thoroughly understood this, is the bishop of Padua, who said quite explicitly that there should be no jealousy concerning the Salesian cooperators because they belong to the diocese and that every pastor should be a cooperator like his parishioners. Lady cooperators were later added to the association of the cooperators because that was what Pius IX wanted."

from the *Code of Canon Law*

Can. 305 §1. All associations of the Christian faithful are subject to the vigilance of competent ecclesiastical authority which is to take care that the integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them and is to watch so that abuse does not creep into ecclesiastical discipline. This authority therefore has the duty and right to inspect them according to the norm of law and the statutes. These associations are also subject to the governance of this same authority according to the prescripts of the canons which follow.

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

from *Christifideles Laici*

Public Life: for Everyone and by Everyone

42. A charity that loves and serves the person is never able to be separated from *justice*. Each in its own way demands the full, effective acknowledgment of the rights of the individual, to which society is ordered in all its structures and institutions.

In order to achieve their task directed to the Christian animation of the temporal order, in the sense of serving persons and society, the lay faithful *are never to relinquish their participation in "public life"*, that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*. The Synod Fathers have repeatedly affirmed that every person has a right and duty to participate in public life, albeit in a diversity and complementarity of forms, levels, tasks and responsibilities. Charges of careerism, idolatry of power, egoism and corruption that are oftentimes directed at persons in government, parliaments, the ruling classes, or political parties, as well as the common opinion that participating in politics is an absolute moral danger, does not in the least justify either skepticism or an absence on the part of Christians in public life.

On the contrary, the Second Vatican Council's words are particularly significant: "The Church regards as worthy of praise and consideration the work of those who, as a service to others, dedicate themselves to the public good of the state and undertake the burdens of this task".

Public life on behalf of the person and society finds its *basic standard in the pursuit of the common good*, as the good of *everyone* and as the good of each person taken as a *whole*, which is guaranteed and offered in a fitting manner to people, both as individuals and in groups, for their free and responsible acceptance.

"The political community" – we read in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* – "exists for that common good in which the community finds its full justification and meaning, and from which it derives its basic, proper and lawful arrangement. The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life by which individuals, families, and organizations can achieve more thoroughly their own fulfilment". Furthermore, public life on behalf of the person and society finds its *continuous line of action in the defence and the promotion of justice*, understood to be a "virtue", an understanding which requires education, as well as a moral "force" that sustains the obligation to foster the rights and duties of each and everyone, based on the personal dignity of each human being.

The spirit of service is a fundamental element in the exercise of political power. This spirit of service, together with the necessary competence and efficiency, can make "virtuous" or "above criticism" the activity of persons in public life which is justly demanded by the rest of the people. To accomplish this requires a full-scale battle and a determination to overcome every temptation, such as the recourse to disloyalty and to falsehood, the waste of public funds for the advantage of a few and those with special interests, and the use of ambiguous and illicit means for acquiring, maintaining and increasing power at any cost.

The lay faithful given a charge in public life certainly ought to respect the autonomy of earthly realities properly understood, as we read in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: "It is of great importance, especially in a pluralistic society, to work out a proper vision of the relationship between the political community and the Church, and to distinguish clearly between the activities of Christians, acting individually or collectively, in their own name as citizens guided by the dictates of a Christian conscience, and their activity in communion with their Pastors in the name of the Church. The Church by reason of her role and competence, is not identified with any political community nor bound by ties to any political system. She is at once the sign and the safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person". At the same time – and this is felt today as a pressing responsibility – the lay faithful must bear witness to those human and gospel values that are intimately connected with political activity itself, such as liberty and justice, solidarity, faithful and unselfish dedication for the good of all, a simple life-style, and a preferential love for the poor and the least. This demands that the lay faithful always be more animated by a real participation in the life of the Church and enlightened by her social doctrine. In this they can be supported and helped by the nearness of the Christian community and their Pastors.

The manner and means for achieving a public life which has true human development as its goal is *solidarity*. This concerns the active and responsible *participation* of all in public life, from individual citizens to various groups, from labour unions to political parties. All of us, each and everyone, are the goal of public life as well as its leading participants. In this environment, as I wrote in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, solidarity "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is *a firm and persevering determination* to commit oneself to the *common good*, that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because *we are all really responsible for all*".

Today political solidarity requires going beyond single nations or a single block of nations, to a consideration on a properly continental and world level.

The fruit of sound political activity, which is so much desired by everyone but always lacking in advancement, is *peace*. The lay faithful cannot remain indifferent or be strangers and inactive in the face

of all that denies and compromises peace, namely, violence and war, torture and terrorism, concentration camps, militarization of public life, the arms race, and the nuclear threat. On the contrary, as disciples of Jesus Christ, "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:5) and "Our Peace" (Eph. 2:14), the lay faithful ought to take upon themselves the task of being "peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9), both through a conversion of "heart", justice and charity, all of which are the undeniable foundation of peace.

The lay faithful in working together with all those that truly seek peace and themselves serving in specific organizations as well as national and international institutions, ought to promote an extensive work of education intended to defeat the ruling culture of egoism, hate, the vendetta and hostility, and thereby to develop the culture of solidarity at every level. Such solidarity, in fact, "*is the way to peace and at the same time to development*". From this perspective the Synod Fathers have invited Christians to reject as unacceptable all forms of violence, to promote attitudes of dialogue and peace and to commit themselves to establish a just international and social order.

from *Discerning the Call 2015*

Please see *Lessons 10 (Session 1) & 11 – Apostolic Commitment*