

Art. 22. Co-responsible in the Mission

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

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

§2. With responsibility and a sense of belonging, every Salesian Cooperator supports the economic autonomy of the Association so that it can carry out its mission.¹

CONSIDERATIONS

Core Themes

1. The Salesian Cooperator: Responsible for the Common Mission
2. Economic Solidarity

Keys to Understanding

A. If every Salesian Cooperator feels responsible for the common mission, that means that the Association *has* a particular mission and that each Salesian Cooperator is an active subject in it due to his or her membership in said Association. The mission is a common one but it is carried out by *individuals* who are held to act in communion and not in an individualistic manner; i.e., as *co-responsible* for it.

The article specifies the *ways* in which every Salesian Cooperator carries out the common mission: “according to his or her own conditions in life, competencies, and possibilities.” The impossible is not asked of the members, but each one is to be reminded that he or she should accomplish whatever he or she can. Specific amounts and modalities are not specified; both are left to the inventiveness and the willing availability of each member according to personal responsibilities to their families and to their job. The article also points out *two areas* in which each member offers his or her responsible collaboration “with a spirit of initiative.” This treats of, in practical, concrete terms, 1) planning and evaluation meetings concerning their various activities and 2) their participation in choosing the leadership for animation and governance (the Councilors). These are two crucial areas for the good running of the Association at the various Levels, for the solid and up-to-date formation of its members, and for the vaster and more efficacious Salesian apostolate of the same.

Within the Association, the Coordinator carries out his or her responsibility with a spirit of service according to the principles of communion and co-responsibility. The Association has chosen a

¹Salesian Family Charter. 20-21.

"collegial" organization at the various Levels, based precisely on these principles. This implies that every task is to be carried out as a service.

These are Gospel principles and are indicated by Vatican Council II in reference to the ordained Ministers – Bishops, Priests, and Deacons – and to all those who have a task, or who have a role to play in the Church. Ordained Ministers and Institutes carry them out in “hierarchical communion” and as an authoritative and qualified service to God's people. Every other role is carried out in “ecclesial communion” and as a service to others. In all those who welcome Him with faith and charity, Christ has instituted through the Gift of His Spirit a new fraternal communion in His Body, which is the Church, in which all members give reciprocal service among themselves according to the various gifts they have received.

B. As concerns economic solidarity, it needs to be stated that in the various drafts of the *Statutes* and *Regulations*, Don Bosco vacillated between requiring obligatory dues to be collected at established times and the invitation to make free-will offerings. He finally decided on indicating that free-will offerings be made “monthly or annually *according to the oblation that the charity of their hearts suggests*” and extended his thought to include indispensable moments of participation which are: “at least the two [annual] Conferences” – the one near the Feast of Mary Help of Christians and the other near that of St. Francis de Sales. He also prescribed that “all these offerings be sent to the Superior General in support of the works promoted by the Association.” Further, he added that “when someone is unable to be present at the Conference, they should see to it to send their offering by the easiest and most secure means.” (see *Rule* of 1876, chap. VI, par. 3&4) This choice for *free-will offerings* is preserved in the *Project of Apostolic Life*, even if some forms of mandated participation in these offerings are permitted according to the choice of the Province.

The article articulates some reasons in support of this choice:

- a sense of belonging to the Association;
- a sense of co-responsibility and of participation of every Salesian Cooperator; and
- the sense of solidarity expressed in the article’s title "Economic Solidarity."

Reference is made in the article to the solidarity lived in the Early Church – an ever-motivating and persuasive remembrance. In fact, Don Bosco reminded the Cooperators of this solidarity on the part of the Christians of Jerusalem. Above all, the article wanted to be in sync with the practice introduced by the Founder and conserved all throughout Salesian tradition.

The offerings and the other forms of funding (owing to its juridic personality, the Association can acquire and possess temporal goods) are not ends in themselves and much less are they made or administered to get rich. They have specific purposes that regard the Salesian mission: the funding of the Councils, whose functioning always creates expenses; that of the various initiatives at the different Levels: workshops, participation in gatherings, resources, networking tools, etc.; and, finally, the solidarity initiatives of the Salesian Family.

The article does not indicate any *particular modalities* which are uniform across-the-boards in the Association and that are to be followed regarding the donation of free-will offerings: on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, it leaves the entire matter in the hands of the Councils at the various Levels.

References

Giovanni Paolo II, *Christifideles Laici*.

Gaudium et Spes 32d.

Lumen Gentium 10b, 18, 24a, 32a.

Midali M., *Nella Chiesa e nella Società con Don Bosco oggi*, 298.

Regolamento di Don Bosco IV 5.

Regolamento di Don Bosco VI 2, 3, 4.

from the *Regulations of the Project of Apostolic Life*

Art. 7 Co-Responsibility in Acting

So that co-responsibility in the mission translates into co-responsibility in acting:

§1. those who are entrusted with leadership roles within the Association, at whatever level, carry out said roles in a spirit of service, according to the principles of communion, co-responsibility, synergy, and cooperation;

§2. given their diverse situations and commitments, Salesian Cooperators offer their witness by participating in various ways in the life of the Association:

- the young, bearers of dynamism, contribute to the common mission with their sensitivity and their creative capacity;
- the adults and the elderly, with their mature experience and long fidelity, bring with them the witness of a life rooted in Christ and lived in temporal realities: in the family, through their commitment in the areas of their own work and of culture, and in their exercise of social, economic, and political responsibilities;
- those for whom for it is impossible to carry out an active apostolate give strength to the educative action and to the apostolate of all the others through the offering of their suffering and their prayer;
- the members of the diocesan clergy who are Salesian Cooperators offer the service their own ministry.

Art. 8 Economic Solidarity

§1. The sense of belonging and of co-responsibility also involves the economic aspect of the Association. For its functioning and for the actualization of the mission at the Local, Provincial, and World levels, the Salesian Cooperators support the Association with free and generous contributions, as Don Bosco wished: "The Cooperators have no monetary obligation whatever, but they will make monthly, or annually, that oblation which the charity of their hearts will tell them."

§2. The Association participates in economic solidarity also through the offerings which it sends to the Rector Major. With such offerings and the help of benefactors, it supports the worldwide needs of the Association, missionary initiatives, and other projects tied to the Salesian mission.

§3. The Association, through the World Council, elaborates an annual plan of economic solidarity based on animation needs for the development of the entire Association.

from the Original Rule of 1876 by St. John Bosco

Article VI. Special Obligations

3. The members have no financial obligation but they will make, on a monthly or yearly basis, such offering as the charity of their heart may prompt. These offerings shall be sent to the [central] Superior for the promotion and support of the works of the Association.

from the Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family

Art. 10. Exchange of gifts

All heirs to the Salesian charism and spirit, the Groups establish among themselves a very close relationship so that each Group expresses the identity of the Salesian Family, but not without reference to the others.

In fact, entering into a Group, in virtue of a specific vocation, means entering the whole Family; it is as though each one feels entrusted to the others in a mutual relationship.

It is then that the different members enable the Family to live the completeness of gifts and values, because in the various Groups can be seen emphasised the particular spiritual features which are the common patrimony and which for this reason cannot be missing in any Salesian heart. The communion of the Family places these at the disposal of everyone.

All this is for the benefit of the mission, since it makes it possible to undertake in a more adequate and effective manner the human development and Christian education of the young, of poor people, of the sick and of peoples not yet evangelised.

The relatively short history of the Salesian Family demonstrates that without real communion there is the danger of a progressive impoverishment of the project of Don Bosco even to the extent of being unfaithful to it. The recognition that without the others the members of a particular Group cannot be themselves, ought to be an awareness cultivated by all, inspiring appropriate expressions and practical attitudes.

Art. 11 At home with Mary

From his childhood Don Bosco saw in Mary his Teacher and Mother, since that was how she had been pointed out to him by the Personage in his dream at nine years of age.

In his first educational undertaking following the custom of the local church, he entrusted his work to Our Lady of Consolation; the boys «poor and in danger » becoming aware of Her protection and consolation.

Later, in communion with the Universal Church living through the experience of the definition of the Marian dogma, he proposed to them Mary Immaculate, presenting her as the teacher of their love and the powerful support of their human and Christian development.

Finally, having recognised that in the founding and the development of his work “Mary has done everything,» even in extraordinary ways, he dedicated the newly born Congregation to the Virgin under the title of Help of Christians.

Then receiving from Mary the inspiration to found the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, he wanted it to be a «living monument » of his gratitude to the Help of Christians. To her also he entrusted the Salesians-Cooperators, so that in their apostolate they might be protected, and find inspiration in Her. He also set up the Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians, linked to the sanctuary in Turin, as a sign of gratitude for the maternal presence of the Madonna in all his works.

This special reference to Mary has profoundly marked the charismatic and spiritual identity of the various Groups of the Salesian Family which have come into being during the XXth century. Some have even included her in the name by which they are officially recognised in the Church, such as the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the Catechist Sisters of Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Missionary Sisters Mary Help of Christians, the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate, the Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrix.

If all the Groups of the Salesian Family venerate Mary Help of Christians as their Principal Patron, some refer to her presence with various titles to emphasise particular aspects of their apostolate.

Mary is considered not only as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians, but also as the Mother of all humanity, so that co-workers, men and women, of various Groups of the Salesian Family also belonging to other religions, cultivate a sincere devotion to her.

With good reason therefore, one can say that the Salesian Family is a Marian Family.

Art. 20. Autonomy and singularity of each Group

Communion in and for the mission does not prejudice, but rather clarifies and strengthens the autonomy and the specific nature of each Group in the Family.

In fact the various Groups enjoy their own autonomy not only spiritual, formative, economic and of government, but also apostolic, fulfilling the mission in their own structures and according to their own particular ways.

In fact it is not a question of imposing a uniform way of acting for everyone: that would lead to a levelling out of the differences, causing confusion and uncertainty in the apostolate. It is rather a question of harmonising what each one is doing in the context of the whole project which is shared by everyone.

The specific character of each Group in the communion, therefore, needs to be recognised and promoted. Young people have the right to be able to make use of the specific service offered by each Group; it is a richness for the Family and for the whole Church, in this way multiplying the forces at work for the good of the young. This communion in autonomy is an invitation to be co-responsible in the mission, but does not necessarily imply co-responsibility in every single enterprise or in every particular local area.

Art. 21. Apostolic Co-responsibility

Co-responsibility requires as a pre-requisite that each Group is able to ensure its autonomous capacity with regard to its own development, to the formation of its members, to its apostolic enterprises, and that it carries out, with the greatest possible effectiveness, its specific vocation and mission ensuring within itself that vitality which is the fruit of fidelity and creativity.

To be hoped for therefore are: 1. Forms of collaboration between the different Groups so that the Salesian mission may be carried out in its various sectors and fields and in the different kinds of works; 2. Collaboration among the Groups which are living and working in the same local area, in conjunction with the pastoral structures of the local Church and civil institutions so as to offer a Salesian contribution, which is varied in its richness and contents, to the common construction of the civilisation of love.

It is obvious that the carrying out of a common project requires a process of convergence that can sometimes mean giving up certain points of view or some future prospects linked to a single Group to which one belongs.

In any case, co-responsibility demands the common commitment to pursue certain shared objectives. All the Groups are called to spread abroad - together with the values of the Gospel - the characteristic traits of the charismatic and spiritual identity of the apostolic Family of Don Bosco. They are the characteristics of the entire Family and therefore cannot be the concern of only some Groups. Everyone, including the individual members are personally responsible for animating and promoting the spiritual heritage received.

The objectives which need to be recognised and pursued by each Group are:

1. To share the preoccupation regarding education in the current historical climate, seeking the best ways to educate boys and girls in the fundamental values of life and to bring them into contact with the Gospel.
2. To make the preventive System known: it represents the synthesis of Don Bosco's pedagogical wisdom and constitutes a prophetic message which he left to his heirs and to the whole Church. It is a spiritual and educational experience which is based on reason, religion and loving kindness.

Reason underlines the values of Christian humanism, such as the search for meaning, work, study, friendship, cheerfulness, piety, freedom not detached from responsibility, the harmony between human sound judgement and Christian wisdom.

Religion means making space for the Grace which saves, cultivating a desire for God, fostering the meeting with Christ the Lord as this gives a full meaning to life, and is a response to the thirst for happiness, progressively taking one's place in the life and mission of the Church.

Loving kindness expresses the fact that in order to create an effective educational relationship it is necessary that the young are not only loved but know that they are loved; it is a special kind of relationship and an affection that awakens in the hearts of the young all their potential and makes it mature even into total self-donation.

Reason, religion and loving kindness are today more than ever indispensable elements in the work of education, and valuable stimuli, in response to the expectations of the new generations, in giving life to a society which is more human.

3. Through personal witness and word of mouth to spread the Salesian spirit: Salesian humanism invests in every individual, and obliges all educators to work tirelessly for its expansion, also in sometimes difficult circumstances; it is the foundation for a new civilisation of love.

4. Promoting the Salesian Movement: Don Bosco involved many people in his educational and missionary work; at all levels he tried to ensure that attention was given to his boys and to people in need. The large Salesian Movement and the links among the many forces at work within it are making a contribution from which everyone can usefully benefit.

from the 2018 *Handbook of St. Philip the Apostle Province*

Co-responsibility in Acting

Art 23. Each Salesian Cooperator makes the necessary renunciations and efforts to be present at and participate in the ordinary meetings of his/her Center and the Formation Days, Retreats, and other initiatives offered by the Province or the Local Center for the deepening of his/her vocation and for the needs of the apostolate.

Art 24. On its part, the Provincial Council will draw up a yearly calendar by July 1 of the current calendar year which will establish set dates, places, and themes for their meetings, Formation Days, Retreats, and other initiatives sponsored by it from August of the current year to July of the next one.

Art 25. The Local Councils, according to the schedule on p. 28, will do the same for their Center and will send a copy of their individual calendar to the Provincial Secretary who will, in turn, formulate a Province calendar of events. He/she will present it to the Provincial Councilors and will then send it out to each Center by September 1 of the current calendar year. The Provincial Councilor for Communications will update the Province calendar on the Salesian Cooperator Province website the Don Bosco Salesian Portal website.

Art 26. In order to facilitate participation in Province-wide Formation Days and other events, the Provincial Council will make them available through the use of social media sites.

Art 27. One Provincial Formation Day yearly will be Province-wide. The other(s) are organized, prepared, and carried out in each Area of the Province, through a collaborative effort of all the Centers in the Area or on a rotational basis from year to year, with each Center taking the responsibility for the annual Formation and Retreat Days prescribed in the *Project of Apostolic Life*. Such collaboration, sharing of responsibilities and gatherings on the part of the Local Centers of an Area will foster the fraternal bonds within the Association and consistent formation and spiritual growth among all the members.

Art 28. Special consideration when planning these Area formation and spiritual moments is to be given to the 3-year plan developed by the Provincial Formator, in collaboration with the Cooperator Provincial Council Delegates.

Art 29. Salesian Cooperators who serve on the Councils of the Association at the various levels are expected to be present and to participate whole-heartedly in the regular meetings of the Council on which they serve and in the Congresses in which they are supposed to take part, according to what is stated in the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

Art 30. To foster the sense of belonging to a world-wide Lay Association of the Faithful within the Salesian Family among all the Members in St. Philip the Apostle Province, the Provincial Council changes its place of meeting on a rotating basis during its three-year tenure, meeting in each of the following areas at least once in that triennium: Louisiana, Illinois, Miami, New York/New Jersey, Tampa, and Washington, DC.

Art 31. Local Coordinators are a part of the Local Salesian Family Commission of their area (still to be formed in some areas and revitalized in others) and contribute to the discussions and planning of the initiatives of said Commission. If he/she is impeded from fulfilling this task, he/she will delegate a member of the Local Council to fulfill this part of the mission. He/she is also responsible to advise and encourage participation in these initiatives at the Local Level. If representing the Salesian Family at the Local Level (and not just the Salesian Cooperator Center), he/she will consult with and share decisions taken with the other Groups of the Salesian Family so that true bonds of unity and collaboration may be strengthened.

Art 32. The Coordinator of the Provincial Council is an *ex officio* member of the Salesian Family Province Consulta. He/she represents the Salesian Cooperators on this Consulta and contributes to the discussions, decisions, and initiatives taken. He/she will then communicate the details to the Association's Centers, thereby contributing to the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family and of reciprocal knowledge and collaboration among the Groups of the Family. If the Provincial Coordinator is impeded from fulfilling this role, he/she will designate another member of the Provincial Council as his/her proxy.

Art 33. Individually, and in conjunction with the other members of the Salesian Family Commission, the Salesian Cooperators of a given area seek out Promised Members who have moved into their area by transfer of their home from elsewhere in the United States or from other countries. They invite them to become part of the Local Center, to active participation in the life and apostolate of the Salesian Family, and, in a spirit of brotherly concern, to see if they are in need of help as they adjust their new home.

Art 34. In the case that the newly-transferred Member is a Bishop or Diocesan Priest, the Local Center closest to him will invite him to be present for the moments of celebration and special initiatives, keeping him informed of all that is happening at their Center. When there is no close Center, the Provincial Council assumes the responsibility to keep contact with said secular clergy.

Art 35. The Provincial Council and the Salesian Family Consulta assist in the above effort by making our presences known through the Salesian Family website and through contacts they initiate with the Provincial Coordinators and Delegates of other countries, beginning with those of our Interamerica Region and then those of the rest of the Cooperator world.

Economic Solidarity

Art 36. “The members shall do all in their power to promote and support the works of the Association whether with their own financial contributions or with offerings collected from charitable people. [They] have no financial obligation but they will make, on a monthly or yearly basis, such offering as the charity of their heart may prompt.” (from Don Bosco’s original Rule) Drawing from Don Bosco’s own thoughts, Salesian Cooperators consider their contributions to the Association as part of their apostolate of saving souls and are not obligated to pay “dues” but, rather, to give as generously as their means permit, or even making a sacrifice, for the needs of the Association and of the Salesian mission in the world, which include, but are not limited to:

- donations put at the direct disposal of the Rector Major for urgent needs
- needs of the Salesian Missions
- monetary support for the animation and governance of the Association at all levels (including costs inherent to the apostolate and to other initiatives for the Formation and spiritual growth of the Members, such as, stipends for guest speakers for Formation Days and Retreats, and for travel expenses for those called to serve on the Councils or represent the Province or Local Center at a given meeting, Encounter, or Congress).

Art 37. Because the great distances between Centers in our Province often necessitates plane travel to meetings and Congresses, subsidy for necessary travel will be given to the Provincial Councilors, including the FMA and SDB Delegates.

Art 38. When preparing its budget, each Local Council and Provincial Council must take into consideration the need for said travel funds so that its Councilors may participate in those meetings required by their leadership role. Lest any Salesian Cooperator called to service in the Association (or in the greater Salesian Family when said service is an *ex officio* task due to his or her role of authority in the Association), feel impeded by lack of funds for travel connected with the animation and governance of the Association, Local Centers contribute generously in a spirit of economic solidarity to the Province.

Art 39. Regional Cooperator Consulta Members or Representatives and World Councilors elected from St. Philip the Apostle Province will receive subsidy for travel from the respective level on which he/she serves, given that such funds exist. When preparing its budget, each Council level, and the Regional Consulta, must take into consideration the need for said travel funds so that its Councilors may participate in those meetings required by their leadership role. A Cooperator of sufficient means may voluntarily

waive the right to the subsidy(ies) listed in Articles 37-39, or part thereof. This is another form of economic solidarity.

Art 40. In a further effort not to place an undue financial burden on the above-named Salesian Cooperators committed to the service of animation and governance in the Association, or on the Members of the Local Centers, use of social communications via the Internet is made for two of the four Salesian Cooperator Provincial Council meetings each year, for one Province Formation Day, and for ordinary Regional and World Council meetings.

Art 41. For the same reasons as those given in Articles 37-40 above, every third year, the Local and Provincial Councilors will gather for the Electoral Provincial Congress. This will also be a time of gathering for all Cooperators who wish to attend for updating and formation, but who will not have the right to vote. Given the extent of our Province, the two annual non-electoral Provincial Congresses in the years intervening between the triennial Electoral Provincial Congresses are suppressed; however, the tasks to be accomplished by the yearly Provincial Congress, i.e., planning and verification, must be carried out at an Area-level Assembly and the results of which submitted to the Provincial Council according to the schedule on p. 28.