

Art. 26. The Apostolic Service of the Delegates

§1. Within the Association, the Delegates, of whatever Level, take part by right and with active voice on the respective Council, assure the “bond of secure and stable union” with the Salesian spirit, and share the charismatic and spiritual experience of the Founder.

In creative fidelity to Don Bosco, they are committed to offering their own specific contribution, even through participation in the collegial decision-making tasks of the Association.

§2. They motivate the Councils in their responsibilities and advocate for organizational autonomy in charismatic communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

§3. They offer the service of being a spiritual, educational, and pastoral guide to support a more efficacious apostolate of the Salesian Cooperators in their area.¹

CONSIDERATIONS

Core Themes

1. Who They Are
2. The Roles of the SDB and FMA Delegates
3. The Leadership at Various Levels

Keys to Understanding

A. The Delegates are members of the Salesian Congregation and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He or she is part of the Council in a responsible and collegial manner, with a specific task: the Salesian apostolic formation of the Salesian Cooperators. For this reason, according to the norms of Vatican Council II, the Delegate must: have formation to this task; be faithful to the doctrine and the spirit of the Church; be capable of nourishing the spiritual life of the laity and of their apostolic sense; be able to counsel the laity wisely, assisting them in their apostolic undertakings and fostering their initiatives; be capable of dialogue with them so as to render their mission efficacious; and be persons who esteem the apostolic works of the laity and promote them. It is particularly recommended that the Religious dedicate themselves with a willing spirit and that they promote the works of the laity according to the spirit and the rules proper to them.

B. The Delegates are called on to motivate vitality from within the Association. This happens by recalling the attention of the Salesian Cooperators to:

- the nature and purpose of the Group inasmuch as it is an Ecclesial Group;
- the motivations to belong, the sharing of responsibility, and the specific tasks required by every role;

¹*Salesian Cooperators: A Practical Way... V, 5.*

- the particular style of governance;
- Salesian authenticity;
- apostolic commitment and task; and
- living the spirituality of the *Da mihi animas; cetera tolle*.

It is a priority of the task of animation to help both the individual Cooperator and the group in this vocational growth. But, above all, the Delegates must be aware that their animating action seeks to make the Cooperators "grow" – above all the leaders – helping them discover their talents and putting them at others' disposal.

In addition to this, the Delegates are the bond of communion between the Religious Community and the Salesian Cooperators. Many difficulties between the Cooperators and the Religious are due to a lack of communication, with the consequent problem of reciprocal uneasiness. The Delegate facilitates the fraternal and apostolic relationships between the Community and the Association.

- ***Co-responsible for Salesian apostolic formation.***

The Delegate is defined as the **formator** in what regards Salesian and apostolic aspects. "Formator" is the term which is most apt to his functions. He or she is a spiritual guide, a prayer guide, and a guide as concerns the apostolate. He or she has to be an expert in the following things, caring for them in co-responsibility with the Council and with the Cooperator in charge of formation:

- the human formation of the Cooperator;
- their Christian and ecclesial formation; and
- their Salesian formation.

Don Bosco wanted the Association to distinguish itself for its operative charity – at the heart of which is the *Da mihi animas; cetera tolle* – in an untiring commitment to the salvation of the young and in the search for apostolic interiority. The presence of the Delegate must assure the Salesianity and the apostolic commitment of the individual Cooperator and of the Association. His or her task is not carried out only in the specific moments of formal formation (e.g., moments of spiritual direction and planned gatherings) but also in the fraternal atmosphere of trust and in the external conditions of prayer life and of communion.

It is the task of the World and Provincial Delegates – and of brother and sister Delegates – to accompany and animate the formative service of the other Delegates. The Delegates, as members of the Councils at the different Levels, participate in the decisions to be made and give their contribution along the process of discernment. The obligation to be present at Council meetings stems from this, without taking to themselves the presidency of the gatherings and meetings or those tasks which belong to the Coordinator and to the Council itself. Further, the Provincial and World Delegates visit the Cooperator Centers under their animation to care especially for their formative journey.

C. The naming of the Delegates is done:

- for the Local and Provincial Level: by the respective Provincial after he or she has listened to the thoughts of the Cooperator Council concerned;
- for the Regional Consulta: by the Regional for the SDB and by the Interprovincial Conference for the FMA; and
- for the World Council: by the Rector Major for the SDB and by the Rector Major on the proposal of Mother General for the FMA.

- ***The Lay Delegate and the Diocesan Priest Delegate: a particular case***

When a Center is not established at an SDB or FMA work, the SDB Provincial may name a Cooperator who is adequately prepared to be the Delegate. Today Cooperators who are Delegates do exist. Those persons to whom one's thoughts go immediately, in consideration of the theological and pastoral preparation, are Diocesan Priest Cooperators or Permanent Deacon Cooperators. But this does not preclude that lay Cooperators who are well-prepared can also be named to this task. The requisite necessary for this type of Delegate is adequate preparation, particularly in Salesianity and in the apostolate. This naming is done by the SDB Provincial following the same *iter* required for SDB Delegates.

It is opportune that the appointment of the Cooperator Delegate be carried out with the knowledge of the Bishop, in consideration of the fact that the Center was established with his permission. Inasmuch as the Cooperator is a Delegate, he or she must be invited to participate in Province Delegate meetings. The Delegate who is not an SDB or an FMA carries out his or her role in the same way as the SDB and FMA Delegates, with the exception – if the Delegate is a lay person – of those priestly functions which are not proper to him or her. It is important that the lay Delegate take care to respect the role proper to the Coordinator and to the other members of the Council and that he or she should not take upon himself those responsibilities which belong to other persons' roles. The fact that he or she is a member of the laity and is also the Delegate does not place him or her in a position of superiority in respect to the other members of the Council.

from the Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family

Art. 42. The role of the Priest in the Salesian Family

Vatican Council II presents priests as guides and educators of the people of God. It states: "Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing will be of little value if they are not directed toward educating men in the attainment of Christian maturity."²

And it gives the reason for this affirmation: "As educators in the faith priests must see to it, either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation as required by the gospel, to a sincere and active charity and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free."

² PO 6.

In this way the Salesian priest is called to his most significant responsibilities in the area of formation. The Word of God, the sacraments and in particular the Eucharist, the service of unity and of charity represent the greatest treasures of the Church.

Paraphrasing an expression of the Council, it can be said that it is not possible to spiritually form an apostolic Family such as the Salesian one unless it has as its basis and centre the celebration of the Eucharist, from which must originate all education aimed at forming the spirit of the family.

The Groups of the Salesian Family have always demonstrated this requirement for formation and they re-enforce it in this *Charter of Identity*.

from the *Original Rule of St. John Bosco*

Article V. Constitution and Governance of the Association

5. In cities and towns where no Salesian house is established, and where the associates have reached ten in number, the Superior shall appoint a head with the title of “Group Leader”. The Group Leader, preferably a priest or some exemplary layperson, corresponds with the Superior or with the Director of the nearest [Salesian] house.

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

Art 50. Salesian Cooperators celebrate the Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables of the Salesian Family. The Formator/Delegate on the Provincial Council seeks out that which pertains to these feast days and forwards it, or what he/she receives concerning it, to the Local Formators/Delegates, who, in their turn, share it with the members of the Local Center.

Art 61. If a person, in dialogue with his/her Formator and Delegate, discerns that the Vocation of a Salesian Cooperator is not his/hers, the Formator and Delegate assist the Aspirant to seek the way in which God is calling him/her to be an active member of the Church. They do this by sharing details about other Groups of the Salesian Family, especially ADMA, if the person’s prime interest is in the apostolate of prayer and Marian and Eucharistic devotion, and other Societies and Associations of the Local Church.

Art 64. In particular cases, such as extreme distance from an established Cooperator Center or the impossibility of attending a nearby Local Center’s initial formation program due to reasons of health or of some other valid impediment, the Provincial Formator and Delegate(s) or another qualified Member of the Salesian Family (Cooperator, FMA, SDB) – always in accord with the Provincial Delegates – will take on the above-mentioned responsibilities in regards to the Aspirant, whether in face-to-face meetings or via the Internet. The Aspirant, in his/her turn, will write the request to make the Promise directly to the Provincial Council.

Initial Formation Initiatives

Art 78. Under ordinary circumstances, Local Centers are responsible for the initial formation of their Aspirants through the work of the member of the Local Council who was chosen to be Formator. It is the Formator’s responsibility, in constant accord and dialogue with the Local Delegate and in keeping with

the guidelines set forth by the Provincial Formator and Provincial Delegates, to follow the Aspirant's formation program and process of discernment in the manner of Salesian Accompaniment.

Formation to the Service of Leadership

Art 84. Formation to the service of leadership begins within the Association with initial formation. All that is contained in *Discerning the Call*, the *Project of Apostolic Life*, and the *Official Commentary* already begins to prepare the Members to be open to assuming leadership roles in the Association and to understand what will be required of them in said roles. It falls to the Formators, in accord and collaboration with their Delegate(s) at the various levels, to help all Aspirants understand this as they discern their vocation.

Art 85. As with all other areas of formation, the one who is primarily responsible to see to growth and maturation in this area is the Salesian Cooperator him/herself. Through prayer and reflection on the mission entrusted to the Salesian Cooperator, one prepares one's heart to accept with willing generosity the call to serve on a Council or on the Regional Consulta and then to seek and employ the means necessary to acquire or strengthen the skills and abilities needed to carry out his/her particular role.

Art 86. In addition to the *Project of Apostolic Life*, *Discerning the Call*, the *Official Commentary*, and other documents of the Association and its Members/Delegates will help those called to the service of leadership to understand better the full reality of the Association, and, therefore, the responsibilities in regard to it which are theirs:

Official Documents from the SEM:

- *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of Salesian Cooperators* (2015)
- *Criteria for Animation and Governance of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators* (2016)
- *Animating Economic Solidarity* (2018)

Official Documents of St. Philip the Apostle Province

- *Delegate Resource Manual* (2017)
- *Province Handbook to the Project of Apostolic Life of April 29, 2013* (2018)

And two others written by the World SDB and Italian National SDB Delegates, respectively:

- *The Identity of the Salesian Cooperator* (2012)
- *A Prophecy's Journey: The History of the Salesian Cooperators from Their Origins to the Threshold of Vatican Council II* (2016).

Delegates

Art 114. The primary tasks of the Provincial Delegates are to formulate and offer programs and initiatives for the formation of the Lay Formators and the Local Delegates, in collaboration with the Regional and World Delegates. Initiatives to fulfill this obligation include:

- the formulation of a systematic formation program, providing ideas, suggestions, and examples to help in their mission to the Cooperators

- a monthly article written and posted to the Cooperator website on the role of the Delegate and his/her mission to the Salesian Cooperator Association
- a personal visit to the Delegates of Centers located where the Cooperator Provincial Council is meeting or when in company with them for Provincial Assemblies and the like
- availability by phone, email, etc., to listen to and respond to their questions concerning their role, the vision of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, and the Cooperator Association
- a face-to-face gathering every third year on the occasion of the Electoral Provincial Congress
- internet meetings, as needed.

Art 115. The Provincial SDB and FMA Delegates collaborate with the Provincial Formator and with each other in the formation of the Provincial Council members themselves, beginning each meeting of the Council with a formation session, drawn from some articles of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, from the *Strenna* of the Rector Major, from an encyclical of the Holy Father, or from some other Salesian or ecclesial source.

Art 116. A high priority for the Provincial Delegates is close collaboration and constant communication with the Provincial Formator so as to guarantee fidelity to Don Bosco's charism, spirituality, and sense of belonging to his Family in all formation programs: initial, on-going, and tailored to a specific person (long distance/for a former Salesian Religious/Diocesan clergy). Connected with this is the grave responsibility on the part of the Provincial Delegates of keeping close ties with and visiting Centers which do not have a Local Delegate, whether due to the fact that there is no FMA or SDB presence nearby or there is no Cooperator or Diocesan Priest ready to act as such. In any event, all Delegates – whether Cooperators or Diocesan Priests – of Centers which have no SDB or FMA connection will be followed closely and assisted by the Provincial Delegates in person, at times, and via other means of communication regularly.

Art 117. Local Delegates, in close collaboration with the Provincial Delegates and Formator, are responsible for the spiritual animation of the Salesian Cooperators and of co-responsibility in their Salesian apostolic formation. They are to be present and participate, with active voice and vote, in all Local Council Meetings and Meeting of their Center. Their presence and active participation is necessary at apostolic initiatives of their Center, all area and Provincial gatherings of the Salesian Cooperators, and, especially formation meetings held to foster their living of their role as Delegate.