

## **Art. 27. Entrance into the Association**

*§1. The commitment to become a Salesian Cooperator demands a personal, free, gradual, and motivated choice which matured under the action of the Holy Spirit and the accompaniment of those who have this responsibility.*

*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.*

*§2. When the Aspirant has reached a sufficient assimilation of the Salesian charism, as recognized by those who are in the position of responsibility in the Local Center, he or she shall present a request for admission. The Aspirant must have reached legal age.*

*§3. Membership in the Association begins with the pronouncement of the personal Apostolic Promise, by which the Aspirant expresses his or her will to live his/her Baptismal commitments in the light of the Project of Apostolic Life.*

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Core Themes**

1. The Dimensions of Choice and of Belonging
2. Formation: Initial and On-going

#### **Keys to Understanding**

The basic condition needed to become a Salesian Cooperator: a free choice. This expression, seemingly taken for granted, causes us to reflect on what it means to speak of the "freedom of choice". It implies verifying the conditions for it not only right from the start but also along the course of one's life and, therefore, is the reason why the adjectives "motivated and gradual" were added.

If it is true that the commitment of the Cooperator is to respond to a vocation (*Statutes* Art. 2), it is just as necessary that one feel and know he or she is called to a life of faith through an interior call from the Holy Spirit which is often mediated by human persons (SDB, FMA, Cooperators) and which is present at the beginning of a free choice. At the start, one asks him or herself the question, "What needs to be done to become a Salesian Cooperator?" Generally, the answer consists of collaborating and putting into action Don Bosco's educative and pastoral project. But there are also underlying discussions that are more complex still: to be a Salesian Cooperator means to take on a way of life in conformity with the Gospel, to participate in the mission of the Church, and to live a life of faith in the everyday with commitment and effort. Therefore, besides the dimension of "doing," that of "being" is highlighted: welcoming God as Father, encountering Christ, the Only-Begotten Son, and living in union with the Holy Spirit. From this, one understands that the choice acquires a profound interior dimension which is not only based on action for the good of poor youth but also on a complete living of the Gospel.

On account of this, the acceptance of a progressive formation program, the fruit of experience, is required. It is a path that helps one discover that the true worth of man lies in the quality of his or her Christian lifestyle and that “man fully-realized” is a “saint” and not a “celebrity” as understood from a human perspective, historically-speaking.

During the process of maturation, formation plays an important role: initial formation is based on organized meetings in which formators seek to help the Aspirant deepen his or her knowledge and understanding of the Salesian charism and of the Magisterium of the Church and of Salesian teaching, as well as through experiencing life in the Association with the Cooperators – which has great weight and has an important role to play in initial formation if it is true that it is life that forms us. Therefore, seeing as how we are constantly called to re-conversion of our hearts and to correct our behaviors in the light of the Gospel, strength is also given to us by our brothers and sisters who share our same path. If the response to one's vocation is personal, the path of growth and of maturation will, without a doubt, be fostered by confronting one another, by encounters, and by sharing openly one's difficulties, doubts, successes, and experiences. For this reason, each Salesian Cooperator is invited to undertake a process of self-formation for his or her entire life, in constant growth, and in a deepening of his or her interior life in the light of God's Word and in harmony with the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

Reaching the point of making one's *Promise* is the first goal one attains after having become fully aware of the commitments required of a member and of one belonging to the Salesian Family. This is the moment in which, by a public act, the Aspirant makes the decision to commit him or herself to an ideal to which to tend after having followed a path of initial formation and of interior maturation.

The *Promise* is also understood as an act of humble abandonment to the Lord: each Aspirant, while aware of his or her own fragility, trusts in the infinite Mercy of the Father, in the salvific Love of the Son, in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and in the powerful intercession of Mary. He or she is also aware that being invited into an Association will sustain and comfort him or her along the journey and, because of this, he or she will live the sense of belonging with joy and will be prompt in the service of others.

## References

Atti II “Convegno Giovani Cooperatori Salesiani”; in *Cooperatore* (dicembre 1982) 769.

Chávez V. P., *Carta d'Identità*,. 38 – 42.

*Christifideles Laici* 57 – 59.

Commissione Episcopale per il Laico, *Le Aggregazioni Laicali*. Nota pastorale della Commissione Episcopale per il laico, 1993, 37 – 43.

*Memorie Biografiche* VII 885; XI 545.

*Regolamento di Don Bosco* V 1.

Viganò E., *L'Associazione dei Cooperatori salesiani*, 21s.

## from the *Regulations to the Project of Apostolic Life*

### **Art. 13 Entrance into the Association**

§1. The person who desires to enter into the Association matures his own choice freely and responsibly, by means of some fundamental steps: meeting with the group of Salesian Cooperators of a Local Center, sharing in their path of formation and participating in the initiatives promoted by it; sharing its spirit and mission, sustained by a progressive understanding, growth, and verification of his/her personal motivations.

§2. The person who desires to enter into the Association is welcomed by those in charge of the Local Center. He or She agrees with the one who is responsible for formation (the Delegate and/or the Formator) on a program adapted to his/her path of discernment and begins, as an Aspirant, this path of formation.

§3. After completing the process of formation in the Local Center, the Aspirant presents his/her written request to take part in the Association.

§4. The Local Council passes the request of the Aspirant on to the Provincial Council, accompanied by its own evaluation based on the Aspirant's knowledge of the charism of Don Bosco and of the contents of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, the Project of Apostolic Life. The Provincial Council, on the basis of such evaluation, proceeds to the approval of the request.

§5. Entrance into the Association happens when the personal apostolic Promise is made. This apostolic Promise is a spiritual and ecclesial commitment which the Aspirant takes on through a free and knowledgeable choice. By means of it, he/she responds to the gift of the Lord and to his or her call to live this personal vocation according to the Salesian charism.

§6. The apostolic Promise is ordinarily made in the Local Center in the way indicated by the person himself and in keeping with the diverse contexts.

§7. In particular situations, where no juridically-established Local Center exists, one of the World Delegates will, in understanding with the Rector Major, give directions regarding the path of formation. This directive is also valid for those persons who, because of logistical difficulties (of place or of time), are unable to be directed to a Local Center.

§8. The apostolic Promise may be received by the Rector Major, by the World Coordinator, by the Provincial Coordinator, by the Local Coordinator, or by someone delegated.

### **Art. 15 Initial Formation Initiatives**

§1. The process of formation accompanies the members along their entire life because the Lord always calls us through the continuous evolution of personal situations and of one's environment.

§2. 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 as regard the human, Christian, ecclesial, and Salesian spheres, taken from:

- the Word of God - the documents of the Church

- the life and work of Don Bosco
- the Preventive System of Don Bosco
- the Project of Apostolic Life of the Association
- the documents of the Rector Major
- the documents of the Association
- Salesian spirituality and sanctity
- the history and development of the charism of the Salesian Family
- the life and work of the Saints, the Blesseds, and the Venerables of the Salesian Family

§3. An integral part of initial formation is an apostolic commitment and, ordinarily participation in the life of the Center.

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

### **CHAPTER IV**

#### **MEMBERSHIP AND FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATOR**

##### **Entrance into the Association**

**Art 54.** A layperson or member of the Diocesan clergy who feels called to be Salesian Cooperator undergoes a period of formation for a minimum of two years, ordinarily within a Local Center. The Local Formator, in accord with the Local Delegate, arranges the time and place of the initial formation meetings. The manual of the Province used for the formation of the Aspirant is *Discerning the Call*.

**Art 55.** A former Salesian Religious, legitimately dispensed of his/her vows, may discern a vocation as a Salesian Cooperator. In this case, the length and content of the formation program will be decided on an individual basis between the former Religious and the Formator concerned, in constant dialogue with the Delegate(s).

**Art 56.** The Aspirant signs the pledge on the reverse side of the “Confidential Biographical Data Sheet” (q.v., Appendix, pp. 53+54), confirming his/her free intention to participate actively in the Formation Program.

**Art 57.** When the Formator, in accord with the Delegate, and the Aspirant feel that he/she has:

- sufficiently absorbed the teachings of the initial formation program
- made the spirituality and the apostolate of the Salesian Cooperator his/her own
- been fully involved in the life and apostolate of the Center and of the Association
- is ready to commit to this Vocation for life,

the Aspirant writes his/her "Letter of Request" (q.v., Appendix, pp. 55+56) to the Local Council asking for their approval for him/her to make the Promise so as to be admitted to the Association. He/she includes in this request:

- his/her motivations for becoming a Salesian Cooperator
- the assurance of sufficient understanding of all that is required of a Promised Salesian Cooperator and the length of time spent in initial formation
- that it is a true Vocation in the Church and membership in an officially-recognized Lay Association of the Faithful, governed by Canon Law
- that it is a Promise for life
- and anything else he/she wishes to share in regards to taking on Don Bosco's mission as his/her own.

He/she signs this request by hand.

**Art 58.** The Local Coordinator sends Aspirants' requests to belong to the Association on to the Provincial Coordinator at least one month prior to the date set for the ceremony of the making of the Promise, preferably by electronic mail. The evaluation of the Local Council regarding each Aspirant's suitability to join the Association accompanies the request.

**Art 59.** The decision of the Provincial Council is final. The Provincial Coordinator notifies the Local Coordinator of it immediately. The Local Coordinator then notifies his/her Council, the Aspirant, and the Local Center of the decision immediately.

**Art 60.** Accompanying the Provincial Council's decision regarding those not accepted to make the Promise are the motivations for the negative decision and some suggestions as to how the Aspirant who wishes to continue with initial formation may mature in those areas, provided there is no grave reason why the Aspirant should not continue in vocational discernment and growth.

**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 62.** Because the Salesian Family works with young people, especially those most-at-risk, and because the Salesian Cooperators are an official entity of the Roman Catholic Church, thereby representing the Local and Universal Church and the larger Salesian Family, every Cooperator must:

- complete an FBI Background Check at personal expense,
- comply with the pertinent respective FMA and SDB Province Guidelines, and
- give the Local Council permission to research information available about him or her on social media, such as, but not limited to, Facebook, Linked-In, Twitter, personal blogs, and websites.

This applies to already-Promised members as well as those in initial formation.

It is the responsibility of the Local Council to provide the information necessary to an Aspirant or the member of a Local Center so he/she may fulfill this requirement. Such requirements and information are posted on the website of the pertinent Diocese, in addition to being available through the Child Protection Office of said Diocese. Salesian Province guidelines are available from the respective Province's Secretary.

**Art 63.** Any proposed Aspirant is required to:

- comply with all stated in Article 62 above
- be in attendance at Formation Days and other initiatives sponsored by the Association or greater Salesian Family which are accessible via the Internet
- be physically present (unless impeded by extreme illness or hardship) at least once yearly on the day of the renewal of the Promise (in this case, he/she renews the Promise publicly during one of the Formation Days via the Internet)
- sustain the Association through monetary contributions, in keeping with economic solidarity,
- supply a written account of his/her Salesian apostolic initiatives carried out in that year
- keep the Provincial Council informed of any subsequent move to another place in the country so that they may be put into contact with a Local Center if there is one nearby.

**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.

**Art 65.** Promised Salesian Cooperators directly involved in youth ministry must also follow the rules established by the Local Church and the respective SDB/FMA Province regarding Criminal Background Checks and must attend a VIRTUS/Protecting God's Children training session, or their Diocesan equivalent program, and present his/her certificate to the Local Council.

**Art 66.** Confirmation of serious transgressions of the moral and ethical teachings of the Church are grounds for immediate dismissal from the initial formation phase, for refusal of admittance to the Association, and for dismissal from the Association. Said decisions will be communicated in writing by the Coordinator concerned (Local or Provincial), in agreement with his/her Council, to the party concerned, in the most charitable way possible. As long as not required by US Law, reasons for said dismissal will be kept *in pectore* and the Councilors will maintain bonds through the charity of their prayers.