

## Art. 29. Responsibilities and Initiatives as Regard Formation

§1. *Salesian Cooperators are the first ones responsible for their own human, Christian, Salesian, and professional formation.*

§2. *The Association promotes and supports personal and group formation through the action of qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, and other members of the Salesian Family.*

### CONSIDERATIONS

#### Core Themes

1. Responsibility and the Dimension of Formation
2. Formation Initiatives

#### Keys to Understanding

The Salesian Cooperator is the first one responsible for his or her own formation. The Association supports them in their personal formation and in that of the group. Three dimensions which must be kept in mind regarding formation can be listed:

1. *Human and professional formation:* The Salesian Cooperator assumes the vocational condition of his or her proper state in virtue of his or her Baptism and of the invitation to the "Follow Me" of the *Promise*. With this *Promise*, he or she commits him or herself with responsibility to an on-going formative journey in faith so as to nourish and mature his or her vocation along the continuous process of the many and different changes in a society which is becoming ever more secular.

2. *Christian formation:* Before all else, one must practice a living "personal" faith of attachment to Jesus and to the Church, as a branch is attached to the vine and is nourished in the "dynamic" Faith of the Church. In fact, growth cannot be individual and lived outside the immense assembly of believers; instead, it is a kind of positive response on the part of the assembly to the three inseparable calls which beckon us to the wellspring that is the Lord. "Come!" "Listen!" "Go!"

3. *Salesian formation:* The charism of Don Bosco, the Founder, and the pastoral on the role of the laity are assured to the Councils and to the Salesian Cooperators through the sharing of experiences lived as Cooperators (meetings, reflections, readings, etc.); by formative resources made by the Association which help growth and which are carried out by qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, other Salesian Family members; and also through their personal commitment to an apostolic service sustained and accompanied by their Center, with particular attention given to the young and the poor.

#### References

Francesco, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169-171.

*Gaudium et Spes*, 4a, 11°.

*Regolamento di Don Bosco*, VI, 4.

Viganò E., *La famiglia salesiana*, 30-32.

*Orientamenti ed indicazioni per la formazione dei Salesiani Cooperatori*, Roma 2016.

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

*Please see also excerpts to Article 27 of this Compendium*

### **Art. 16 On-going Formation Initiatives**

§1. 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.

§2. The formative initiatives are:

- periodic meetings, ordinarily held monthly, carried out according to the demands of life and of the apostolate of the members of the Center; and other forms of encounter, possibly open to the territory and to the civic society;
- intense moments of prayer and of discernment;
- contacts with the Groups of the Salesian Family at all levels;
- deepening of the documents of the Rector Major and of the publications of the Salesian Family, giving preferential attention to the Salesian Bulletin.

§3. Meetings and planning or verification initiatives which the Association promotes at various levels have great importance in the formative plan. Proposals of specific themes with other Groups of the Salesian Family are to be favored. Participation in such initiatives must be adequately prepared, and their fruits are to be shared with all the members of the Center.

§4. The Association 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.

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

### **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.

**Art 79.** *Discerning the Call*, the *Project of Apostolic Life*, and the *Official Commentary on the Project of Apostolic Life* are the ordinary resources for the Aspirants' study and practice, as guided by the Formator.

**Art 80.** Salesian reading material, including the Rector Major's yearly *Strenna*, Church documents on the laity and the mission of the Church, and other literature or media resources dealing with human (from a Catholic Christian perspective) and Christian formation are also good for the formation of the Aspirant.

**Art 81.** In addition to these studies, the Formator may avail him or herself of guest speakers, retreats, Formation Days, Days of vocational discernment, and other initiatives sponsored or promoted by the Association, the Salesian Family, or the Local Church which will be of benefit to the Aspirant's formation and discernment.

### **On-going Formation Initiatives**

**Art 82.** The Cooperator him/herself is the one who is first responsible for his/her own formation, growth, and maturation as a "good Christian and honest citizen" and as a Member of the Association of Salesian Cooperators and the Salesian Family of St. John Bosco.

**Art 83.** Normal sources for permanent formation through reading, reflection, and assimilation in one's life include (copies of which should be available in the Local Center's Library):

- The Holy Bible
- The Encyclicals and other writings, homilies, and speeches of the actual Holy Father
- The Magisterium of the Church: especially regarding the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church the role of the laity and Lay Associations of the Faithful in the Church, and the Documents of Vatican Council II
- The lives of the Saints, especially of Salesian Saints and Blesseds
- The contemporary documents of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops and of the Ordinary of one's Diocese,
- The *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*
- The teachings and documents of the actual Rector Major, especially his *Strenna*
- The current writings, messages, and directives of the World Council, the Provincial Council, the Regional Consulta, and any of their Members
- Web resources of the Association on the Regional- and world-wide levels and other Salesian websites: ([www.sdb.org](http://www.sdb.org), [www.cgfma.net](http://www.cgfma.net), <http://www.ilgrandeducatore.com>, e.g.)
- Salesian publications, especially, *The Salesian Bulletin* (for the most recent list of Salesian Publications available from New Rochelle, please visit "Salesiana Publishers" under "Shop Salesian" on Don Bosco Salesian Portal)
- Publications and courses of study which help one grow and mature as a human being, according to Catholic Christian perspective

- Publications and courses of study which keep one up-to-date in youth ministry, especially those of Salesian origin
- Publications and courses of study which keep one up-to-date in regards to legislation and political candidates' stances concerning Social Justice and Pro-Life issues
- Publications and courses of study which keep one up-to-date in one's field of work
- Publications and courses of study which keep one up-to-date in their area of particular service as a Local or Provincial Councilor, if applicable.

### **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 the 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).

## from the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*

### **Art. 22. Horizons of the apostolic spirituality of the Salesian Family**

Apostolic spirituality is the centre which inspires and animates the life of communion in and for the mission of the Salesian Family. It is, in fact, a communion which does not arise from human planning, nor does it coincide with an organisation no matter how perfect nor with refined techniques for bringing people together, but flows from that pastoral charity which having been evoked by the Spirit in the heart of Don Bosco, inspired him even to the heights of holiness.

Spirituality means that our life is being guided by the Spirit, He who graces with his charisms the various Groups belonging to the one Family. Apostolic means an inner force which spurs on to donation and service, giving salvific effectiveness to educational and evangelising activity and uniting the whole of life around this centre of inspiration..

Moved by faith hope and charity, the members of the Salesian Family share in the action of God who is always working to communicate his merciful love to every individual, and they feel themselves to be fully a part of the communion and the apostolate of the Church.

### **Art. 23. Collaborating with God the Father**

Putting God as the unifying centre of one's life, the source of fraternal communion and the inspiration for one's activity, pre-supposes a certain image of God. Not the distant God, totally immersed in His solitary state and imperturbable silence with no interest in the earth, but God-Love (cf. Jn 4,16) who gives Himself totally to humanity, a «Father who goes on working» (Jn 5,17) sharing the life of his children, engaged in responding, in practical ways and with infinite love to peoples' expectations; a God so involved in our history as to lay himself open to man's freedom, accepting the risk of rejection, always giving himself as love which forgives (agape).

Silently but effectively working within history, this God associates with himself active and busy co-workers, who in the practical circumstances of life, devote all their energies to proclaiming His love and undertaking good works, drawing from Him the strength to love, to give and to serve.

For the Salesian Family and its members, «living in the presence of God» means cultivating an intense and constant loving relationship with Him (“union with God”); feeling oneself therefore filled with a love similar to His, that which gives itself in a loving and selfless way and freely spends itself for the special beneficiaries of the mission; it also means knowing how to see and to respond to the signs of his mysterious presence in the expectations and the requests of the men and women of our day.

It is to this God, the merciful Father that Don Bosco addressed his heartfelt prayer: «*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*». To all his disciples, men and women, Don Bosco repeats: «The most divine of all divine things is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls, and it is a sure path to the highest holiness».

### **Art. 24. Living with the sentiments of Christ**

Don Bosco placed at the centre of his spiritual life and apostolic action a convinced devotion to Jesus present in the Eucharist, the Master of the house – as he often used to say – and to the Divine Saviour, whose gestures of salvation he wanted to imitate.

Grafted onto Christ in force of our Baptism, we allow ourselves to be assimilated to Him, docile to the action of the Spirit, so as to be able to say with Saint Paul: «Life to me is Christ» (Phil 1,21), «I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me» (Gal 2,20); but also hearing the other exhortation of the Apostle: «In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus». (Phil 2,5)

This means: an attentive awareness of being the One sent by God guided in everything by the Spirit; unconditional obedience to the will of the Father in carrying out the mission entrusted to him, facing with courage difficulties and contradictions (cf. Jn 5, 17s); the continuous and generous commitment to freeing people from all kinds of death and to communicate to everyone life and joy; a passionate concern for the little ones and the poor with the solicitude of the Good Shepherd; love which always forgives even to becoming a victim on the cross; the promise of being the travelling companion of his disciples as he was with the two on the way to Emmaus.

It is the image of the Good Shepherd, in particular, which inspires our activity, indicating two valuable aspects of Salesian apostolic spirituality.

The first: The apostle of the Lords puts at the centre of his or her attention individuals as such, and loves them just as they are, without prejudice or exception, precisely as the Good Shepherd does, even with the lost sheep.

The second: the apostle does not put himself forward but always and only the Lord Jesus, the only one who can liberate from all forms of slavery, the only one who can lead to the pastures of eternal life (cf. Jn10, 1-15), the only one who never abandons the lost one but makes his own his weakness, and full of confidence and hope, goes in search of him, retrieves him and leads him back so that he might have life to the full.

Rooted in Christ and conformed to Him is the deepest joy for a son or a daughter of Don Bosco. From this comes love for the Word and the desire to live the mystery of Christ re-presented by the liturgy of the Church; the careful celebration of the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation, which educate to Christian freedom, to conversion of heart and to the spirit of sharing and of service; participation in the Paschal mystery of the Lord, which opens the way to a new understanding of life and of its meaning, personal and communitarian, interior and social.

### **Art. 25. Being docile to the Spirit**

The Christian life is, of its very nature, life in the Spirit. Caught up in the process of renewal promoted by the Vatican Council II, the Salesian Family has tried to deepen its relationship with the Spirit of the Risen Lord, defining its own identity in terms of the charism of Don Bosco, a true gift of the Spirit and source of the spirituality which animated his apostolic Family.

The features of the person of the Holy Spirit taken from the revealed Word, are particularly illuminating for the spiritual-apostolic life of those belonging to the various Groups of the Salesian Family: the Spirit is the Creator and gives life; he is the One sent by the Father and by the Risen Lord in order to extend in history the work of salvation; it is He who introduces believers to the Truth /Christ so that they may live in Him and of Him; He is the Voice who speaks to the conscience of people to open them to the light of truth and prepare them for the gift of love; He is a Presence particularly alive and active in Christians communities, uniting them in communion and in service, instilling in the faithful the spirit of the mission;

He is the One who anticipates, assists and accompanies those who are engaged in the work of evangelisation.

The attitudes the members of the Salesian Family are called to assume in His regard are: serenity and trust in the certainty that we are always supported by the power of the Spirit; docility to his secret inspirations; wise discernment of his presence in human events, both personal and communitarian; intelligent and courageous collaboration in his work for the coming of the Kingdom of God in peoples' lives, in the Church and in society; gratitude for the charism of Don Bosco and generosity in putting into practice his educative and apostolic plan

## **Art. 26. Communion and mission in the Church**

Don Bosco had a great love for the Church and he showed this in his sense of belonging to the ecclesial community. At the same time, aware of having received a particular charism for the education of youth, he developed it so as to build up the Church in various cultural contexts.

The Family of Don Bosco has among its family treasures a rich tradition of filial fidelity to the Successor of Peter, and of communion and collaboration with the local Churches: «No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake» «The counsels and even the wishes of the Pope must be a command for us».

This unconditional devotion to the Pope was in Don Bosco an expression of his passion for the Church. And it is an inheritance that we accept and by which we live.

The Church, in fact, is the visible presence of the Risen Christ in the history of humanity; it is the communion of brothers and sisters in the unity of the faith and in the variety of charisms and ministries; it is charity which urges us to make the love of God known by proclaiming the Gospel; it is a service offered to humanity in order to build a world that corresponds to God's plan; it is a family which finds the centre of its unity in Christ the Lord and the servant of unity in the Successor of Peter.

The spirituality inherited from Don Bosco is eminently ecclesial: it expresses and nourishes the communion of the Church, building up within Christian communities a network of fraternal relationships and of active collaboration; it is an educational spirituality that sets out to help young people and the poor to feel at ease in the Church, and to be builders of the Church and to be participators in her mission; it is a spirituality which enriches the whole Church with the gift of the holiness of so many of his sons and daughters.

## ***from Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of Salesian Cooperators***

### **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*.

The significance and particular objective of each of these pillars of formation are as follows:

- o *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;
- o *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;
- o *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
- o *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.

*See also the manual itself, sections 1.1 – 1.3.4*