

## **Art. 31. Leaving the Association**

§1. *The Salesian Cooperator who, through personal choice, intends to cease to be part of the Association will communicate this to the Local Council with a written declaration. The Local Council will send a copy of the declaration to the Provincial Council.*

§2. *The decision to dismiss one of its members from the Association for grave reasons, must be taken by the Provincial Council, at the justified request of the Local Council, in the spirit of charity and of clarity, after having verified a lifestyle which is incongruous with the fundamental duties expressed in the Project of Apostolic Life. This decision shall be communicated to the interested party in writing.*

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **Core Themes**

1. A Personal Choice
2. Dismissals from the Association

#### **Keys to Understanding**

As an encouragement to the Cooperator, the *Project of Apostolic Life* reminds us that the personal commitment of each one to be faithful to his or her vocation also involves the commitment on the part of the other Cooperators and of the Salesian Family.

No matter what might befall them in their lives, Cooperators will never find themselves standing alone before these realities and responsibilities. They will always find brother and sister Cooperators ready and willing to support and help them “with affection and solidarity”. The entire Chapter III, “In Communion and Collaboration,” affirms this. If we want this assurance not to remain a dead letter but to become a lived reality, every Cooperator, every Center, and every Council must be conscious of this responsibility and renew it constantly. The sense of fraternity must be strong and their mutual affection real.

In keeping, then, to what Don Bosco wanted his apostolic Salesian Family to be, the SDB and the FMA must be aware of this their task and must take interest in it through deeds and through efficacious support of their brother and sister Cooperators along the path of fidelity to their vocation.

The foregoing reflections help us understand that belonging to the Association can cease only for *grave reasons*, substantively two: a personal choice of the Cooperator or a decision of the Provincial Council.

#### **A. A Personal Choice**

In the first case, it might be that the Cooperator, with or without blame, *no longer feels in profound agreement with the ideal chosen previously* and, through a clear understanding of the situation, wants to be freed from the commitments assumed, even (and, perhaps, most of all) from the external ones. Given that he or she pledged him or herself before God and before the other Cooperators when making the *Promise* and thus entered into a public ecclesial Association, it is more than right that the *Project of Apostolic Life* require of him or her an attitude or seriousness: he or she must have “seriously” matured

this decision by considering that the choice made previously was by no means a small matter; and he or she must manifest this new decision in an explicit request made to the Provincial Council, in such a way that the Association may be officially up-to-date as regards this situation.

### **B. *Dismissals from the Association***

The second type of leaving is more grave and rather delicate: it does not concern the case of a Cooperator who merely does not participate anymore in the activities of any Center (he or she may always come back!) but of *one who lives in stark contrast with the commitments he or she had freely assumed*. We are not speaking of an unseen sin which only God can judge but of obvious, well-known, and confirmed behaviors which constitute a *public scandal* and which seriously compromise the witness of the Association, and in the final instance, throw discredit on the Church itself. We need to pray that the Lord preserve the Association from this! Evidently, when making this decision, the members of the Council must let themselves be guided by the two attitudes suggested to them in the *Project of Apostolic Life*. On the one hand, they will treat their brother or sister with a "spirit of charity"; i.e., with respect, understanding, and dialogue; on the other, they must investigate the situation to obtain "clarity" – which means, with realism, without delay, and being concerned for the good name of the Association, thus considering this dismissal a painful necessity.

### **References**

Cf. *Progetto di Vita Apostolica* art. 2 § 1.

Cf. *Progetto di Vita Apostolica* art. 3.

Cf. *Progetto di Vita Apostolica* art. 36 §1, §3.

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

### **Statutes: Art. 2 Salesian Cooperators: a Specific Vocation in the Church**

§1. To commit oneself to be a Salesian Cooperator means to respond to the apostolic Salesian Vocation, gift of the Spirit, taking on a specific way of living the Gospel and participating in the mission of the Church. It is a free choice, defining one's existence.

### **Regulations: Art. 2 Salesian Cooperators in Their Socio-Cultural Reality**

§1. Salesian Cooperators make the educational solicitude of the Salesian charism their own in all areas of life. They are faithful to the Gospel and to the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church. They are attentive to the signs of the times; they continue God's creative work and give witness to Christ with integrity, hard work, and coherence of life; through the educative mission and serious, up-dated professionalism; through sharing joys and sufferings in faith; and by being available to give service in every circumstance.

### **Statutes: Art. 3 One Vocation: Two Ways to Live It**

§1. Don Bosco conceived the Association of Salesian Cooperators as being open both to the laity and to the secular clergy.

§2. Lay Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolic commitment and live the Salesian spirit, with lay characteristics and sensitivities, in the ordinary situations of life and of work.

§3. Secular bishops, priests, and deacons who are Salesian Cooperators live their ministry taking inspiration from the pastoral charity of Don Bosco, whose priestly life is a model of one which gives pride of place to working with commitment in behalf of young people and in places where ordinary folk work and live.

### ***Regulations: Art. 3 The Association in Civic and Ecclesial Realities***

§1. The Association is attentive, with the thrust of the Preventive System, to the cries coming from society for the integral promotion of the human person and of fundamental human rights.

§2. The Association intervenes courageously, according to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church to promote a sociopolitical culture inspired by the Gospel and to defend human and Christian values. It illumines and urges its members to assume their own commitments in society with responsibility. Salesian Cooperators make themselves present and bring with them the unique characteristics of the Salesian charism to Associations, Apostolic Movements and groups, educational agencies, and to organizations which have service to youth and to the family as their objective, and which promote justice, peace, and solidarity with peoples on the path of development.

§3. The Association follows social volunteering with particular attention. It adheres to formative proposals and participates in the initiatives of organizations of Christian inspiration.

§4. The Association commits itself to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

### ***Statutes: Art. 36 The Local Level***

§1. The fundamental nucleus of the Association is the Local Center. Ordinarily, it gathers together Salesian Cooperators who work within a specific territory. Every Center has a Delegate appointed by his or her respective Provincial. The Center is preferably established near a Salesian work – either of the Salesians of Don Bosco or of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

§3. Men and women of good will, even if of a different Christian Confession, or of a different religion, and/or culture, who feel an affinity with the Salesian charism, can share in the initiatives of the Local Center and offer their collaboration as “Friends of Don Bosco.”

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

**Art 48.** On its part, the Local Council, in keeping with Article 14 §2 + §3 of the Regulations, approaches the Member who has not fulfilled the requirements, outlined in Article 47 above, after a period of three years so as to listen and dialogue as to why it is so, and then to encourage the fulfillment of their commitment both out of a sense of duty and out of the need for spiritual refreshment and growth on the part of all.

**Art 51.** Each Local Center establishes a day, preferably on a Salesian Feast, when all its Members come together to celebrate their vocation as Salesian Cooperators through the renewal of their Promise. It may also take place at a gathering of the larger Salesian Family on the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, of St. John Bosco, or of Mary Help of Christians, e.g. The moment takes place by preference within the context of Holy Mass at the local parish connected to a Salesian work or in their local Diocesan parish as a means to spread awareness about the Association and encourage others who feel called to discern their possible vocation. Ideally, this is followed by a gathering with refreshments and time to share in the joy of these Members on the renewal of their commitment.

**Art 53.** The Secretary of the Local Council (or of the Provincial Council if the Aspirant/Promised Member is attached to it due to great distance from any Center, or for any other reason), will note in the appropriate register the date of the renewal of the Promise on the part of the Members, noting also any Members who were absent, and the date of the making of the Promise on the part of the Aspirants.