

Art. 40. Final Dispositions

§1. *The Association of Salesian Cooperators is governed by the present Statutes. Other norms are contained in the Regulations at the World Level, or in the Handbooks at the various Levels.*

- *The Statutes define the apostolic Vocation of the Salesian Cooperator: his or her identity, spirit, mission, and communion, and the principles of the organizational structure of the Association.*
- *The Regulations contain those practical points which specify and regulate its action, methodology, structure, and organization. It renders concrete the principles of the Statutes, to which it is subordinate, so they may be lived out in a practical manner.*
- *The Handbooks (formerly called Directories) list those particular dispositions of the Association to adapt the Project of Apostolic Life to the concrete functioning in the diverse territorial realities. They are approved by the respective Councils and ratified by the Councils of the immediate higher Level, who must guarantee that the dispositions conform to the Statutes and the Regulations.*

§2. *The present Statutes can be modified at the proposal of the Supreme Moderator, of the World Council, or of the Provincial Councils. The proposed modification must include a clear and detailed presentation of the motives which justify said modification, must define the concrete objectives which follow from it, and the principles on which it is articulated. It pertains to the Superior of the Association to evaluate and accept the proposed modification.*

The process of modification will be defined by the World Council with the consent of the Rector Major.

The modification must be approved subsequently by an absolute majority from among the participants at the World Congress, by the Superior of the Association, and by the Apostolic See.

CONSIDERATIONS

Core Themes

1. Structure and Value of the *Project of Apostolic Life*
2. Modalities and Modifications of the Documents Comprising the *Project of Apostolic Life* or Integrated into It

Keys to Understanding

A. At the base of the plan for revision of the prior *Rule of Apostolic Life*, we found it necessary to subdivide the documents into two parts:

- the *Statutes*, thin in form yet essential in substance, which intend to represent the true identity card of the Salesian Cooperator and of the Association, and, precisely for this reason, it is less subject to variations along time;
- the implementing *Regulations*, which are more easily subject to modifications and integrations, and which seek to gather together the organizational and governmental aspects of the Association.

Such parts are completed by the Handbooks, which are texts prepared at the different Levels of the Association's structure (and subject to the necessary approval and ratification of the Council of the next higher Level). They integrate and/or apply specific aspects of the *Regulations* regarding the governance and the animation of the Centers so as to render the principles and the prescriptions contained in them flexible and adapted to the reality of the given area.

B. The need for statutes for an ecclesial Association is directly set forth in the *Code of Canon Law*, in Canon 304 §1, where it states:

All public or private associations of the Christian faithful, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes which define the purpose or social objective of the association, its seat, government, and conditions required for membership and which determine the manner of its acting, attentive, however, to the necessity or advantage of time and place.

The same *Code of Canon Law*, foresees the intervention and the approval of the ecclesiastical authority for the modification of the *Statutes* of every public Association.

Canon 314 states: *"The statutes of each public association and their revision or change need the approval of the ecclesiastical authority competent to erect the association according to the norm of can. 312, §1."* On account of this, the *Statutes* are subject to a particular and complex *iter* of approval by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The presence of rules which define the origin, the identity, and the organization of an Association is always viewed from the angle of an inter-relationship between the lay aggregations within the Church, whether for a reciprocal recognition or for a more fruitful communion. Paragraph 30 of *Christifideles Laici* states, in fact:

It is always from the perspective of the Church's communion and mission, and not in opposition to the freedom to associate, that one understands the necessity of having clear and definite criteria for discerning and recognizing such lay groups, also called "Criteria of Ecclesiality". The following basic criteria might be helpful in evaluating an association of the lay faithful in the Church:

- The primacy given to the call of every Christian to holiness, as it is manifested "in the fruits of grace which the spirit produces in the faithful" and in a growth towards the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity. In this sense whatever association of the lay faithful there might be, it is always called to be more of an instrument leading to holiness in the Church, through fostering and promoting "a more intimate unity between the everyday life of its members and their faith".

- *The responsibility of professing the Catholic faith, embracing and proclaiming the truth about Christ, the Church and humanity, in obedience to the Church's Magisterium, as the Church interprets it. For this reason every association of the lay faithful must be a forum where the faith is proclaimed as well as taught in its total content.*

- *The witness to a strong and authentic communion in filial relationship to the Pope, in total adherence to the belief that he is the perpetual and visible center of unity of the universal Church, and with the local Bishop, "the visible principle and foundation of unity" in the particular Church, and in "mutual esteem for all forms of the Church's apostolate". The communion with Pope and Bishop must be expressed in loyal readiness to embrace the doctrinal teachings and pastoral initiatives of both Pope and Bishop. Moreover, Church communion demands both an acknowledgment of a legitimate plurality of forms in the associations of the lay faithful in the Church and at the same time, a willingness to cooperate in working together.*

- *Conformity to and participation in the Church's apostolic goals, that is, "the evangelization and sanctification of humanity and the Christian formation of people's conscience, so as to enable them to infuse the spirit of the gospel into the various communities and spheres of life". From this perspective, every one of the group forms of the lay faithful is asked to have a missionary zeal which will increase their effectiveness as participants in a re-evangelization.*

- *A commitment to a presence in human society, which in light of the Church's social doctrine, places it at the service of the total dignity of the person. Therefore, associations of the lay faithful must become fruitful outlets for participation and solidarity in bringing about conditions that are more just and loving within society.*

The fundamental criteria mentioned at this time find their verification in the actual fruits that various group forms show in their organizational life and the works they perform, such as: the renewed appreciation for prayer, contemplation, liturgical and sacramental life, the reawakening of vocations to Christian marriage, the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life; a readiness to participate in programmes and Church activities at the local, national and international levels; a commitment to catechesis and a capacity for teaching and forming Christians; a desire to be present as Christians in various settings of social life and the creation and awakening of charitable, cultural and spiritual works; the spirit of detachment and evangelical poverty leading to a greater generosity in charity towards all; conversion to the Christian life or the return to Church communion of those baptized members who have fallen away from the faith.

C. The importance of the Rule was suggested to Don Bosco by direct intervention from heaven, when in the "Dream of the White Ribbons", the Blessed Mother recommended to him the importance of binding his collaborators to himself by obedience, which was translated into the realization of the rules to be respected and followed. Here following is the account as given by Don Bosco himself: (*Biographical Memoirs* vol. II 233)

In the meantime, I found myself being surrounded by a very vast and ever increasing number of boys, but, as I kept looking to the Lady, the premises and the means were also growing accordingly. I saw then a very grand church [the actual Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Torino] on the very spot She had pointed out as the place where the soldiers of the Theban legion [sic] had been martyred. There were a great many buildings all around, and in the center stood a beautiful monument. While these things were taking place and I was still dreaming, I saw that priests and clerics for helping me, but after a while, they left. I tried everything to get others to stay, but after a while they too left me alone. Then I turned once more to the Lady for help. ‘Do you want to know what to do to keep them?’ She asked. ‘Take this ribbon and bind their foreheads with it.’ Reverently I took the white ribbon from Her hand and noticed the word Obedience written on it. I immediately gave it a try and began to bind the foreheads of these volunteers. The ribbon worked wonders, as I went ahead with the mission entrusted to me. All my helpers gave up the idea of leaving me, and stayed on. Thus was our Congregation born.

D. If the request for a revision of the *Statutes* is indeed considered a very rare act, the discussion is different where modifications to the *Regulations* are concerned. In this case, as article 37 §3 of the same text says: *The present Regulations can be changed and on the proposal of the Supreme Moderator, of the World Council, or of the Provincial Councils. In every case, though, it falls to the Superior of the Association to approve the initiative for modification, which will then be published in a timely manner.*

This is certainly a simpler and more flexible possibility, respecting, at all times and in every case, collegiality and being sensitive to the evolution of the times and of the needs which present themselves from time to time.

References

Codex Iuris Canonici.

Memorie Biografiche vol. II.

from the *Regulations of the Project of Apostolic Life*

Art. 35 Handbooks

In order to render the principles and prescriptions of these *Regulations* flexible and adaptable to the different territorial realities of the Association, the animating and governing bodies foreseen by the same *Regulations* for the development of the Salesian charism and the Association can create “Handbooks” for said purpose which integrate and/or apply aspects which regard the governance and the animation of the Centers.

Every Handbook (Local and Provincial) undergoes the evaluation of the Council concerned (Local/Provincial), which accepts it by means of an absolute majority of those who have the right to vote and presents it to the World Council for its definitive approval.

The same process is applied in the approval of modifications to the different Handbooks.

Art. 37 Final Dispositions

§1. The Salesian Cooperators respect and apply the present *Regulations*.

§2. Any proposal for modification must:

- offer a clear and detailed presentation of the motivations which can justify it;
- define the concrete objectives which follow from it;
- indicate the principles on which it is articulated.

The process of modification is determined by the World Council under the supervision of the Rector Major.

§3. The present *Regulations* may be modified on the proposal of the Superior of the Association, of the World Council, or of the Provincial Councils. In whatever case, it is the responsibility of the Superior of the Association to approve the modification initiative, which will be published in a timely manner.

from the 2018 Handbook of St. Philip the Apostle Province

Final Dispositions

Art 150. This handbook was presented to the World Council on an *ad experimentum* basis in 2015. It was studied by the Cooperators of the Province as to its appropriateness, efficacy, and sufficiency. The reviewed and revised version, ratified on July 15 at the 2017 Electoral Congress, was re-submitted to the World Council for approval of the finalized form in January 31, 2018. Following its approval by the World Council, it may be modified by an absolute majority of the Provincial Council when deemed necessary or desirable. NOTE: The English version of this document is the official document of St. Philip the Apostle Province, eastern United States of America.