

Art. 5. The Association in the Salesian Family

The Association of Salesian Cooperators is one of the Groups of the Salesian Family. Together with the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and other officially-recognized Groups¹, it is a bearer of the common Salesian Vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco's project in the Church and in the world.

The Association brings to the Salesian Family those values which are specific to the secular state, respecting the identity and autonomy proper to each group. It lives a particular relationship of communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales which, by the will of the Founder, has a specific role of responsibility within the Family.

CONSIDERATIONS

Core Themes

1. Belonging to the Association and the Salesian Family
2. Configuration, Responsibilities, and Values in Relation to Don Bosco's Project
3. Bond of Communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales

Keys to Understanding

A. Don Bosco founded one spiritual Family composed of different and complementary Groups, even if he did not succeed at his time to realize this unity in an appropriate canonical form. The original unity of this Family has its roots in communion of spirit and in the mission directed to the service of the young and common folk. In the light of the Magisterium of Vatican Council II, the Family founded by Don Bosco has been recognized as a charismatic reality; i.e., as an ecclesial gift of the Holy Spirit destined for growth and expansion among the people of God throughout time - beyond the mutable circumstances of place and of time and according to a determinate and permanent direction.

Three urgent needs require the communion of Salesian forces: the social context which is particularly touched by the process of secularization urges and prompts us to avoid every form of isolation and self-sufficiency; the ecclesial context in its rediscovery of the People of God as protagonists in the history of salvation; and the vastness and complexity of the problems which our youth face impel us to accentuate the forms of allocating the forces working in this sector and their mutual collaboration. It is not a matter only of a simple "strategy of action", but of building together a "future" in the light of the Gospel for the realization of the Kingdom of God. Our Founder Don Bosco and his Salesian Family are to be understood within this ecclesial vision which urges us forward to overcome all restrictive concepts which would reduce both Don Bosco and his Family to the "private property" of we who continue his Work. Consequently, the Salesian Family is an ecclesial reality which becomes a sign and a witness of the vocation of its members for a particular mission in the spirit of Don Bosco. In such a way, the Salesian Family develops an original spirituality which is charismatic in nature and which enriches the entire Body of the Church and becomes a Christian pedagogical model.

¹Superior Council of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco. "[Guidelines Adopted by the Superior Council for Acceptance into the Salesian Family.](#)" Trans. *Acts of the General Council*. 304.2 (1982): 61-65. Print.

B. Different types of Groups belong to the Don Bosco's apostolic Family, each with its own particular kind of bond with it and with each other. The criterion adopted regarding what kind of bond links them is primarily a *vocational* one: the common Salesian Vocation makes it such that some Groups have tighter ties among themselves. The ones with the closest ties are those which the Holy Spirit inspires to seek after Christian sanctity by committing themselves to the mission to the young and to common folk according to the Salesian Spirit. They are the ones who know that they are co-responsible and collaborate to fulfill this mission according to such a spirit. The three Groups founded by Don Bosco himself (Cooperators, SDB, FMA) belong to this category, given this vocational sense. [Although Don Bosco also founded a fourth Group, the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA), it is on a different level from the first three because its members do not make a lifelong Vow or Promise and theirs is not a group of apostolic action but primarily an apostolate of prayer.]

In time, the Spirit of the Lord enriched the Salesian Family with other Groups. These are those Groups which *participate in the mission* - not simply those who are the intended receivers of Salesian action (i.e., the young and the poor). These distinct Groups constitute a polychromatic array of forces which represent all the different life circumstances and all the forms of apostolic Salesian work. They give the concrete possibility to respond better to the multiple demands of the mission but on the condition that they truly feel to be one Family only and wish to collaborate in fact and in deed.

Then there are other Groups or persons who gravitate around these officially-recognized ones and who have various types of bonds with them but are not connected by a Salesian Vocation or by the education they received. When taken together, they form a vast "Salesian Movement." The Salesian Family occupies a certain place within this Movement as the "motor" and unifying center. The social dynamics proper to such a movement have made it such that Don Bosco has become the patrimony not only of the Salesians but also of the entire Church and of humanity. In effect, the "Salesian Movement", while remaining, *per se*, an ecclesial dynamic, can include different forces, even those that are rather heterogeneous and which have different organizational modalities and different interests as regards human promotion and societal concerns, given that the "Movement" is open to collaboration even with non-Christians and sometimes with non-believers. In short, persons of goodwill, even if they do not always know in-depth the values that are central to a Salesian education as expressed by the Preventive System, can still gravitate around Don Bosco and his ideals.

C. The Salesian Family is a project of life and of unified action – both integrated and open – to which individuals are called by the Holy Spirit and towards whose realization participation is effected in different ways. It is a *unified* project because many values are held in common and are to be realized together, given the fact of having been called for the one saving mission proper to Don Bosco and to be carried out according to his spirit. The action of all the members of the Salesian Family – understood as a holistic promotion and education of the young to the Faith – moves along the lines of co-responsibility even if the expressions of this apostolic action will differ according to the times, persons, and needs. It is an integrated project because each Group works on it according to its own proper identity: Consecration (the SDB and FMA Religious and the other Religious Institutes – secular Institutes where the VDB and the CDB are concerned) and the concrete form of life (priestly or lay, celibate or wed) proper to each individual member of the Salesian Family. It is a project *animated by the Holy Spirit* Who keeps united all those who have been "called together". It is a project which implies *communion within a just autonomy* so that each Group might express the richness proper to it in a holistic way.

D. As to what concerns the proper bonds with the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Association lives a special rapport of communion with the Salesian Society which, by the will of the Founder, has a specific role of responsibility within the Family. The Salesians have the function of being and giving "stability": they live the Salesian mission and spirit within Religious Consecration according to the fullness desired by Don Bosco. Their profession of the Gospel Counsels furnishes the helps necessary for this stability and for faithful creativity both in the broader realm of the Church Universal and within, among the Groups comprising the Family. They carry out both an internal and an external unifying function because, in a spirit of service, they propose close ties with each individual Group and also between the Groups.

References

Atti del Capitolo Generale Speciale 161-175, 177.

Costituzioni. SDB (1972) art. 5.

Costituzioni. SDB (1984) art. 5, 126.

Desramaut F., *La storia primitiva della Famiglia salesiana secondo tre esposti di Don Bosco*, *Lumen Gentium* 12.

Midali M. (a cura), *Costruire insieme la Famiglia salesiana* (LAS Roma 1983) pag. 172-181.

Viganò E., "Il Rettore Maggiore alle Volontarie di Don Bosco", in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore* n. 295, p. 52-76.

Chavez V. P., *Carta d'Identità della Famiglia Salesiana*. Roma 2012.

from the *Regulations of the Project of Apostolic Life*

Art. 9 Particular Bonds with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

§1. Relations with the SDB confreres and the FMA Sisters² develop in a climate of reciprocal trust. The animation of the Centers which are established at Salesian works involves the Delegates, in particular, their respective Provincial, and the Local Religious Community. These have the task of contributing in various ways to the formation of the members so that they might promote and give witness to the Salesian charism, above all in the lay environment.

§2. The SDB and FMA Provincials, with the collaboration of the Animators and Directors, guarantee unity in communion and in the mission. They commit themselves to promote the spiritual growth of the Centers and to involve the Religious Communities in witnessing to the values of sanctity and in the generous service of animation.

² Superior Council of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco. "Agreed Policy of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the Animation of the Cooperators." Trans. Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco. 37-41. Web. 30 Nov. 2013. <http://cooperatori.sdb.org/cooperatori/files/regvitaaping.pdf>.

Art. 10 Ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family

§1. The Salesian Cooperators, recognizing the common spirituality and mission which unite them to the other Groups of the Salesian Family work in solidarity and in synergy in confronting the pastoral challenges of the Salesian mission.

The ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family are expressed particularly in apostolic co-responsibility. This requires, in some cases, the mutual commitment to carry out common objectives, to share educational concerns, and to make the Preventive System known.

Each and every Salesian Cooperator is personally responsible for animating and promoting the spiritual inheritance received.

§2. In order to realize this communion with the Groups of the Salesian Family in a concrete way, the Salesian Cooperators are called to participate actively in encounters and celebrations; days of formation and of updating; moments of animation, friendship, and familiarity; and days of prayer, retreats, and spiritual exercises.

§3. They are particularly open to collaboration with the Salesian Lay Associations while respecting their diverse identities.

from the Identity of the Salesian Cooperator

The Salesian Family (Statutes, Project of Apostolic Life, 5) pages 9-10; 63-66

Don Bosco consciously, purposely founds one single Family, the Salesian Family, so that his work will continue.

At the conclusion of one of his studies, Fr. Desramaut summarizes the “*identity of the Association*” in 1876 (in *Costruire insieme*, 1983, pp. 94-100) and concludes: “There was the fraternal association of three societies, two Religious, and one non-Religious, whose members:

- were strictly united to the Superior of the male Congregation, who was the center of the entire structural system,
- pursued the same moral (sanctification) and social (particular apostolic service) goals,
- lived in common according to the values and to a program, in the degree in which the Statutes, Religious or not, permitted to each one”

Aware of being, by the dispositions of Divine Providence, the Father of a vast movement of united and joined spiritual-apostolic forces, Don Bosco lived his call profoundly. Although helped by his temperament and the socio-ecclesial mentality of his time, he also held the firm conviction that the charism which he was passing on to his sons was original. Thus writes Don Stella: “He appears dominated by the aspiration for unity, the “*vis unita fortior*” (a united force is stronger), in which we see reflected his rather firm idea about his religious patrimony: that of “*one single Family*” in the image and likeness of the

human family which has God as its Father, and also that of the Church which has the Pope as its common Father” (*Don Bosco...* I, p. 225). In 1877 he expressed his concept in a stupendous text for the first General Chapter in which he puts the three groups he founded on the same plain and in association with each other, using his typical stylistic form of a triple “*We have...*” (cited by P. Stella, I, p. 225, and by the *Acts of the General Chapter*, SDB, no. 153).

One can declare that for Don Bosco no one group was ever conceived or existed in isolation, outside of a unitary vision, stronger and richer than the distinction among the three groups required by Canon Law and by a legitimate process of personalization, but, unfortunately, exaggerated over the passage of time and history.

The fact that the first three groups - the Salesian Cooperators (SC – formerly CC), the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) - were the object of the direct charismatic founding action on the part of the Founder is to be considered fundamental. The first mode of existence for the Salesian Family was that of intimate communion among the SDB, FMA, and Cooperators, all “held in the reins” by Don Bosco himself. This is the first form, and probably the most typical and profound one. Precisely this historic fact makes us understand something further: the yet more special place held by the SDB. For them, Don Bosco was “Founder” in a totally special way: “*the sure and stable bond of union*” (Reg. CC II). Logically, according to tradition, the Rector Major, inasmuch as he is Don Bosco’s successor, has taken this place of Father and Center of Unity for the entire Salesian Family. And, as Father of the Salesian Family, we listen to what he has to say to us today:

I make a pressing invitation to this Family to acquire a new mentality – to think of ourselves and to act always as one Movement, with an intense spirit of communion (unity of heart), with a firm will to act in synergy (unity of intent), with a mature capacity to network (unity of plans). In the *Regulations* of the Salesian Cooperators, Don Bosco wrote: “In every era, unity among good people was deemed necessary so they could help each other in doing good and in keeping far from evil... Weak forces, when united, become strong; if one little cord taken by itself is easily broken, it becomes rather difficult to break three united together. Weak forces, united, become strong: *Vis unita fortior, funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.*” We need never forget that we were founded by a Saint of social charity, Don Bosco (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 40), who was conscious of the fact, however, that educative pastoral work needs cooperative charity and that, to this end, the Holy Spirit raises up charisms” (Don Pascual Chavez, *Strenna 2009*).

ONE FRATERNAL COMMUNION

“The members of the Salesian Congregation regard all Cooperators as brothers [and sisters] in Jesus Christ. They shall call on them for collaboration in things that may redound to the greater glory of God and the good of souls. In like manner, the Cooperators should feel free to call on the members of the Salesian Congregation.” (1876 Rule, ch. VI, 1)

“We believe that the time has come for the Salesian Religious and Salesian Cooperators to institute a mutual relationship of true fraternity at every level. From this point forward, it will constitute a new style of Salesian life.” (“Message of the Cooperators to the Special General Chapter,” July 2, 1971)

“Fidelity to the Founder urges us to make it a reality that you ‘become conscious and complete collaborators, side-by-side with us, and not under us; not only, therefore, are you faithful and docile workers, but capable of responsibility in the apostolate.” (Don Ricceri) (*Acts of the Special General Chapter*, “Declaration to the Cooperators,” n 734).

1. A strong feeling of communion with the Salesian Family

a) Reconstructing unity

The “fraternity” we speak of is indeed the one that the Salesian Cooperators live with each other (Don Bosco says that they are “brothers” and “confreres”). (Reg. 1876, chap. VI, 2 and VII, 5) But the one that they live with all the other Groups of the Salesian Family is greater still. And this is one of the great graces that the Lord grants within one’s vocation: *to be members of an immense fraternal community*. It is clear that this has immediate repercussions on the concrete way of being a Salesian Cooperator.

The Salesian Family can now find in the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco* (heretofore: *Salesian Family Charter*) a precious and sure reference. It describes the charismatic identity of the Salesian Family – everything which refers to its missions, its spirit, its relationships, as well as formation and methods of education and evangelization.

The seed sown by Don Bosco has grown to become a full and robust tree, a true gift of God to the Church and to the world. In fact, the Salesian Family has lived an authentic springtime. To the aforementioned Groups have been united, under the impulse of the *Holy Spirit*, other Groups which, with their own specific vocations, enrich the communion and broaden the Salesian Mission.

The charismatic “seed”

His spirit, mentality, pastoral experience, and his vision of the world and of the Church brought Don Bosco to *certain convictions* and corresponding initiatives:

- *the universal mission of all Christians* (the Church), to be undertaken in solidarity, is to save every man and the entire man. Within such a mission, his sons and followers are characterized by their preference for the young, the poor, and the people not yet evangelized;
- the utility, indeed, the urgency and the necessity of this mission impels people *to be united spiritually and to come together to work* on whatever undertaking would lend itself to this goal;
- *the possibilities* - which the Spirit gave to him and to Mother Mazzarello - had to be lived by people in different states of life, and, therefore, contribute to the union of the “good” in the Church’s great mission, and, in particular, with “Salesian priorities.”

b) In the Third Millennium

In the Third Millennium our principal goal is to express, in a more evident manner, communion in the mission according to the *constants of our origins and the development of the Salesian Family*. One thing

has always remained constant: *educative passion*, and, in particular, for the poorest youth, who are helped to become conscious of their dignity as persons, of their worth, and of the possibilities which their life has for God and for the world.

The Salesian Family will seek as one to give *substance to its very presence in society and efficacy in its educational action*: there are the needs of the young to respond to, life to safeguard, poverty in its different manifestations to destroy, peace to promote, human rights to be declared and realized, and Jesus to be made known.

2. Some needs jump out

- a. to deepen, to understand better, the *possible common field of action* and the characteristics of the way we carry out the mission - this carries with it the need to look, to reflect, to dialogue, to study, and to pray together in order to find the path we need to follow *in the spirit of communion*. It is this sign of love which the young are waiting for from us and, certainly, they will feel its impact and its benefits.
- b. to put spirituality back at the center as a stimulus for communion for the sake of the mission, in keeping with the times of the Church and of the conditions of today's religious experience - this necessitates formation on the part of the Members and involving others in this task.
- c. This is a pressing invitation to acquire a new mentality, to think and to act always as a movement, with an intense spirit of communion (agreement), with the firm determination to act in synergy (with a unity of intents), with a mature capacity to work in a network (unity of projects). We can never forget that we were founded by a Saint of social charity: Don Bosco (see *Deus Caritas Est*).
- d. to understand and to experience flexible forms of collaboration - "think globally, act locally."
- e. to deepen the Salesian experience, carrying it out with lay characteristics.

3. Directions for the future

a) Resources

Which resources should we emphasize? In the first place, the *formation of persons* and reinforcing our Communities or Groups. Still, we need to elaborate and to acquire a *common charismatic culture or mentality*.

Certainly, the support of an organization is useful, but it only has a subsidiary value and must meet concrete needs and situations.

b) Ecclesial visibility of the Salesian presence as a "movement"

It would be interesting to put ever more into action as a movement all the synergy that is available and thus be able to have a visible presence in the social and ecclesial realities. We must overcome two dangers which are by no means imaginary: on one side, a protagonism which is too greatly proclaimed, and, on the other an unjustifiable "absenteeism." Our presence, within the local Church, ought to be very visible, in solidarity with the Bishop, and with the Priests, and not a work of great propaganda or of a declared affirmation; we ought to show our capacity to work for certain causes, making it seen that

we are not “living for ourself” but for the ecclesial community, which, in its turn, exists for the salvation of the world.

c) *A “Salesian Family Culture”*

In order that the vision and the mindset of working as Family reach every Branch and the entire Tree, it is absolutely necessary that all the members of the individual Groups become consciously aware that they belong to a *vast movement of persons born from the apostolic heart of Don Bosco* and that they make themselves ready for synergy, for convergence, for multiple, diverse, flexible, and updated collaboration.

d) *Don Bosco, Father and Teacher: our point of reference*

Don Bosco is a “giant of the Spirit” and he has left us a rich and well-defined heritage: our *spiritual patrimony*. He is the initiator of a true school of apostolic spirituality which is both new and attractive. He is the mandatory point of reference for each and every one of us who, moved by a particular impetus of the Holy Spirit, feels called to share, today in our times, both his destiny and his mission – in whatever state of life we find ourselves, and each according to his/her own rank and level. Belonging is formed around some unifying center: a person, a criterion, a style. For us, this person is our “Don Bosco today”: our Rector Major.

from the “Agreed Policy of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the Animation of the Cooperators”

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO AND THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS FOR THE ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS.

The RECTOR MAJOR
OF THE SALESIANS,
Fr. Egidio Viganò,
and the SUPERIOR GENERAL
OF THE FMA
M. Marinella Castagno

in view of the fact that "in the Church the ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS is approved by the Apostolic See as a public Association of the faithful and participates in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St. Francis de Sales" (RAL 6,1. cf. CIC. 303);

bearing in mind that "the Cooperators' Association is one of the groups of the Salesian Family. With the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.... it is a bearer of the common Salesian vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco's project in the world" (RAL 5);

in the light of art. 25, 1. of the Regulations of Apostolic Life of the Association of Salesian Cooperators, which states: "Special relations unite the Cooperators to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who, through the Sister Delegates, animate the centres set up in association with their works. This animation is

analogous to that carried out by the Salesian Delegates, and is regulated by an agreement made between the Rector Major and the Mother General of the F.M.A" *[please note that what follows here has been superseded and amplified by what is written in PVA 2013]*

AGREE AS FOLLOWS

Art. 1

1. Without prejudice to their own Constitutions and Regulations, the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, aware of their responsibilities, commit themselves to observe the *Regulations of Apostolic Life* of the Association of Salesian Cooperators in accordance with their respective competence and within the limits indicated by the Regulations themselves.

2. In this commitment they will make special reference to local and provincial councils of the Cooperators who have to govern the Association at those levels in collegial fashion (RAL 43,1). And since the various local Centres of the Association are organised according to a provincial plan "based on the structure of the Salesian province" (RAL 42,1), the SDB Provincial is recognized as the one who makes present the ministry of the Rector Major in services of "animation", guidance and promotion (RAL 23,3, and 42,2).

Art. 2

The fusion of a local Centre attached to a work of the FMA with a local Centre attached to an SDB work or vice versa, requires the consent of the competent SDB and FMA Provincials, and will take place by a collegial act of the Provincial Council, after hearing the views of the respective local Councils, by a decree of the Coordinator of the same Provincial Council. The new Centre succeeds the two previous Centres as regards economic assets and liabilities, unless a different arrangement is made in the decree of fusion.

Art. 3

1. If it should happen that an SDB or FMA work, to which a local Centre is attached, should be suppressed, the Centre can be transferred to a neighbouring SDB or FMA work, where a Centre has not yet been established, in the same manner as is indicated in RAL 45,2 after hearing the views of the local Council which is being transferred.

2. In the event of such transfer proving impossible, the local Centre may be made independent under the same conditions, with the previous written consent of the Bishop of the diocese.

Art. 4

Except in the case of fusion referred to in art. 2, a local Centre may be suppressed in itself, or by suppression of the SDB or FMA work in connection with which it was erected, for just reasons recognized by the Provincial Council, with the previous consent of the SDB Provincial and also of the FMA Provincial in the case of an FMA work, under the conditions foreseen in RAL 45, 2; for the suppression of an independent local Centre, the Council must hear the opinion of the Bishop of the diocese. The temporal goods of suppressed Centres, including financial assets and liabilities, pass to the Provincial Council, unless a different arrangement is made in the decree of suppression.

Art. 5

Local delegates who are not priests will strive as far as possible to obtain for their Centre the services of a Salesian priest, to be appointed in agreement with the SDB Provincial, for the important moments of prayer and discernment and for the sacramental and liturgical life of the Cooperators. Such a priest, even if he be not a Salesian, shall not be a member of the local Council nor have any organizational responsibilities.

Art. 6

When local Centres are erected attached to SDB or FMA works which are near each other, it is of the greatest importance that relationships be laid down to ensure common understanding and collaboration, by mutual agreement between the local Councils concerned, while respecting each Council's proper autonomy and without prejudice to the higher competence of the Provincial Council.

Art. 7

The Provincial Council, in agreement with the SDB Provincial and the competent FMA Provincials shall decide in the case of the different local Centres erected in association with FMA works whether they belong to its own provincial grouping, bearing in mind all the circumstances, especially the geographical configuration of the FMA Provinces and of diocesan structures. In case of doubt or disagreement recourse must be had to the World Consulting Body.

Art. 8

In provincial groupings which bring together Centres associated with FMA works of different provinces, joint pastoral action shall be fostered as far as possible, with the organization of common initiatives especially in the field of formation. In the carrying out of activities care should be taken to preserve the necessary solidarity with and participation in diocesan pastoral work, in accordance with RAL 18,2.

Art. 9

SDB and FMA Provincials, in the area of their respective competence, must appoint without undue delay the SDB and FMA Delegates for each local Centre or provincial grouping of Centres, in accordance with RAL 46,2.

Art. 10

If within the confines of an FMA Province there is more than one Provincial Council in operation, the FMA Provincial Delegate is by right a member of each of them. The FMA Provincial Delegate is also competent to visit the Centres erected in association with FMA works.

Art. 11

1. The SDB Provincial Delegate carries out his duties of spiritual animation and Salesian apostolic formation in respect of all the Centres of the provincial grouping for which he has been appointed; for this purpose it is highly desirable that he be a Salesian priest.

2. In the performance of his task, he will work in common agreement with the FMA Provincial Delegate so as to ensure fruitful apostolic results and in view of combined pastoral activity.

3. In agreement with the competent FMA Provincial and with the FMA Provincial Delegate, he will visit the Centres erected in association with FMA works, also for the purpose of preserving and developing the relationships (RAL 24,2.) which bind the Cooperators to the Salesian Congregation.

Art. 12

Relationships of collaboration and shared responsibility between the Salesian Congregation and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as regards the Association of Salesian Cooperators at international level shall be studied periodically and by common accord by the Councillor General for the Salesian Family and for Social Communication (cf. SDB Const. 137) and by the FMA Vicar General (cf. FMA Const. 126). For this purpose both may avail of the collaboration of specialists.

Art. 13

Among the five members he is able to appoint to the World Consulting Body of the Salesian Cooperators in accordance with RAL 48,1, the Rector Major will include a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, previously presented by the FMA Superior General.

Art. 14

The SDB Rector Major and the FMA Superior General will see to it that this agreement is put into practice, and will jointly resolve any doubts or disputes which may eventually arise in its regard.

Rome, 16 August 1986

Fr. Egidio Viganò

Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco

M. Marinella Castagno

Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

from *Knowing Don Bosco* by Fr. Pascual Chavez, SDB

The Idea of the Cooperator in The Mind of Don Bosco

Levels of Belonging and Commitment to An Original Idea

“I Always Needed the Help of Everybody”

Don Bosco was never afraid to ask. In order to enter the seminary, he went begging for the first time, the first of a long series throughout his life.

All that remained now was to supply him with the clerical habit and accessories that his mother could not afford to provide. Father Cinzano discussed this problem with some of his parishioners, who eagerly agreed to help. Mr. Sartoris supplied the cassock, Mayor Pescarmona the hat; the pastor gave him his own cape! Others donated a clerical collar, a biretta and a few pairs of socks while a good woman of the parish volunteered to take up a collection to buy him a pair of shoes. The good Lord will act thus again in later years. Through charitable people, He will assist John ... in all his undertakings. We heard Don Bosco repeat more than once: 'I always needed the help of everybody!' (*Biographical Memoirs* 1:274-275).

Don Bosco was never ashamed to beg.

After a conference at Toulon in 1881,

Don Bosco made the rounds of the church to take up a collection. As he did so, something out of the ordinary occurred. When he held out the plate to a workman, the latter rudely turned away. Don Bosco passed him by and softly said, "God bless you." The man then thrust his hand into his pocket and dropped the equivalent of five cents in the plate. Looking into his eyes, Don Bosco said, "May God reward you." The man repeated his gesture, this time giving ten cents. Thereupon Don Bosco told him. "My friend, God reward you even more!" On hearing this the man took out his purse and donated a franc. With a telling glance of tenderness Don Bosco moved on. As though drawn by a magnet, the man followed him through the church into the sacristy, and later even into the town, keeping after him until Don Bosco disappeared from view." (*Biographical Memoirs* vol. XV, p. 45).

The Don Bosco Cooperators

Don Bosco hesitated for quite some time before giving a name to his non-religious helpers, settling on the name Salesian Cooperators only after a long series of events.

The introduction to the text of the Regulations, published in Albenga in 1876, opens with the words : "To the Reader. No sooner had the work of the oratories begun in 1841 than some pious and zealous priests and lay people came to help in the cultivation of the copious harvest among the young people in danger. These co-workers or cooperators were always the support of the pious works which Divine Providence placed in our hands."

Not only Cooperators who have made their promise, but a vast network of cooperation, support, friendship, charitable donations, etc., very well cared for. There is a need to recover this original idea of

Don Bosco, developed by Fr. Rua and his successors, which made it possible for the Salesian work to spread throughout the world.

In recent years an attempt has been made to make the Cooperator better understood, appreciating more one of the aspects in Don Bosco's vision (that of the "external" Salesian.)

Don Bosco had the idea of a re-organization of Catholics in order to re-Christianize society; the idea of giving financial support to Salesian works; the idea of Catholic lay "volunteer service" in the pastoral area (teaching catechism, helping the parish clergy) or the social area (through education, active presence and guidance, training, safeguarding).

The things Don Bosco said in conferences and did himself clarified the nature, the forms, and the significance of cooperation. He was addressing cooperators and benefactors, but also people engaged in various apostolates (autonomous or as part of Church-sponsored activities). *Practical forms of charity* constitute a large part of what he said and did, as he made appeals that were more and more insistent and demanding.

At a formal conference on June 1, 1885, Don Bosco declared: "To be a Salesian Cooperator means to cooperate with other people in the support of a work, the purpose of which is to help Holy Church in her most immediate needs. By so doing, one helps to promote an undertaking warmly recommended by the Holy Father since it will educate boys in virtue and guide them toward the sanctuary. Its main purpose is to educate the young who are today the target of evil people, and to promote the love of our religion in the midst of the world, in schools, in hospices, in youth centers, and in the family circle and to promote also morals, prayer, the approaching of the sacraments, and so on."

In the 21st century

Approved by the Holy See on May 9, 1986, and promulgated by the Rector Major, Fr. Egidio Viganò, the following May 24, the New Regulations of the Association of Salesian Cooperators define the renewed image of the Cooperator at the dawn of the 21st century with regard to the identity, the spirit, the mission, and the organization of the Association.

"Cooperators are Catholics who, living their faith within the framework of their own secular condition, draw their inspiration from Don Bosco's apostolic project: by committing themselves to the same mission among the young and poor in partnership and in a brotherly way; in close communion with the other members of the Salesian Family; working for the good of the Church and of society; to the best of their ability."

Those who drew up this article wanted to go back to Don Bosco's original intentions, according to which the Cooperators are real Salesians in the world; in other words Christians, lay people or priests, who without professing the religious vows, live their own call to holiness in the service of the young and the working classes according to Don Bosco's spirit. Defined in this way, Cooperators have three characteristics: Catholics, in the world, and Salesian.