

FORMATION DAY
February 28, 2015
Marrero, LA, via Fuze

SLIDE 1 – TITLE SLIDE

Da mihi animas; cetera tolle TODAY!

“Towards Greater Significance with our Renewed *Project of Apostolic Life*”

I. Introduction

First, welcome to all who are taking part in our Formation Day today, whether in person here or via “the cloud”. We, on the Cooperator Provincial Council, have been working and praying hard so that this may be a time to kindle anew our zeal for the salvation of souls and to deepen our awareness of the great gift entrusted to each of us in our vocation as Salesians. This day is one of listening and of sharing, of study and of learning, of prayer and reflection, and of celebrating and deepening what it means to live the *Da mihi animas; cetera tolle TODAY!* as a Salesian Cooperator – and as Salesian Family – so as to be of greater significance according to the way of sanctity traced out in the renewed *Project of Apostolic Life*.

SLIDE 2 – PVA

By now, you have all received your own personal copy of the *Project of Apostolic Life* – your Rule of Life – your way to sanctity, to live the Gospel¹ - according to Salesian Spirituality. Prayerfully, you received it during a dignified ceremony worthy of its great value and the importance it must have in your lives as promised Cooperators. Through a serious reading and study of the *Project of Apostolic Life* you will discover the greatness of the vocation to which God has called you and the depth of commitment to live and work as a “true Salesian in the world”.

SLIDE 3 – DON CHAVEZ

As Don Chavez expressed it in his Presentation, “From this moment of its promulgation, the *Statutes* must occupy a privileged place both in the personal life of every Cooperator and in that of the entire Association. This carries with it the need for its contents to be known and its values interiorized. The *Statutes* describe the spiritual riches of your charismatic identity; define your apostolic project; trace the path of your sanctification; and invite you to give witness to them as your greatest gift.”² It is important that you spend time deepening and incarnating all that this “book of life” contains, especially these points which are highlighted with greater emphasis in this renewed version of your Rule:

SLIDE 4 – RED #1

1. the apostolic nature of the Cooperator vocation – with the young and for the young;

¹The Association of Salesian Cooperators. *Project of Apostolic Life*. Statutes, art. 41. Trans. Sr. Denise Ann Sickinger, FMA. (Madrid, Spain: Advantia Comunicación Gráfica, S.A., 2013) Print.

²“Presentation.” *Project of Apostolic Life*. 10.

SLIDE 5 – PURPLE #2

2. a solid formation, both personal and through the work of the Association;

SLIDE 6 – BLUE #3

3. involvement in and collaboration as Association and with the Salesian Family as a whole;

SLIDE 7 – GREEN #4

4. the lifetime commitment to be a true Salesian in the world;

SLIDE 8 – PURPLE #5

5. the responsibility to be a model of Salesian spirituality and charism, together with the DB, the FMA, and the members of ADMA, for the other 26 Groups of the Salesian Family, while honoring and respecting each one's autonomy and unique apostolate;

SLIDE 9 – DARK RED #6

6. living Salesian Spirituality as lay person, nurtured by a profound communion with God and trust in Mary Help of Christians;

SLIDE 10 – LIGHT BLUE #7

7. presence within the local Church where other Salesians are not;

SLIDE 11 – ORANGE #8

8. effective presence in helping our society live Gospel values in political, social, and economic spheres;

SLIDE 12 – CLEAR #9

9. greater autonomy as Association while strengthening the charismatic bonds with the SDB and FMA.

SLIDE 13 – HELP WANTED

In short, then, we can say that you, the “laborers in the harvest”, must live the *Project of Apostolic Life* in a renewed way, with great commitment and with faith in God's Providence and in Mary Help of Christians' guidance and the intercession of all our Angels and Saints.

SLIDE 14 – DON BOSCO HOLDING PVA

It must be translated into your life in such a way that your zeal for the salvation of souls, especially those of the poorest youth, finds the way to meet the new challenges that our present society puts before us, while remaining ever faithful to Don Bosco's charism.

SLIDE 15 – DON BOSCO AND FMA

II. Different World, Same Yearnings – the “*Da mihi animas*”

A. Greatest Needs of Our World

So what are these “new challenges” which we face today? Certainly, the world in which we live is a vastly different one from the one Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello knew. And I'm not just speaking of the

new technologies, globalization, new poverties, etc., which have all been spoken of so many times before. Instead, I wish to focus on what touches the heart of the Salesian Mission: the salvation of souls.

SLIDE 16 – NIHILISM

No longer do we live in a world which is immersed in the struggle between Protestant and Catholic belief, but between pagan and atheistic thought and religious thought, between non-Christian and Christian, often at the cost of bloodshed. We are living in times which see fully developed the world view that was just beginning to take root in Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello’s times: that of secularized life, wherein religious values are divorced from Laws and daily life – even by government mandate.

SLIDES 17 & 18 – “POLITICALLY-INCORRECT” / “DOUBLE-SPEAK, 1984”

Further, instead of obedience to a personal God Who acts through His Church and speaks to us in Scripture and the Magisterium, a full-blown emphasis on individual freedom leads many to proclaim that truth – objective truth – does not exist and thus everyone can act with impunity in any way that pleases him or her.¹

SLIDE 19 – ME!

We also live in a time in which governmental social services have taken over many of those areas which the Church pre-eminently cared for, at least since the Middle Ages: education, hospitals, assistance to the elderly and the poor, and child protection services and associations to give children safe places to be and sports and activities in which to engage. While this, *per se*, may not be a bad thing, as it could “free us” to do direct evangelization and catechesis and to attend to the Sacramental needs of our people, still, it secularizes those services and places their existence at the whim of the government’s budgets and political/philosophical/ethical and moral beliefs – or, lack thereof.

SLIDE 20 – ADAM SMITH

Worse still, they may impose mandates upon those entities still run by the Church. These mandates may hamper or almost completely annul our capacity minister to the SOULS of those entrusted to our care

SLIDE 21 – SHACKLES ON RELIGION

– calling our legitimate following of Christ’s mandate to “go and teach all nations and baptize them” “proselytizing” – with the consequent prohibition of it by law, causing us to face the “ultimate threat” of losing our governmental funding if we persist in our “offensive” ways!

SLIDE 22 – POPE FRANCIS ON PROSELYTISM

B. Greatest Needs of Our Young

And our young people: with the consolidation of parishes, the closing of Catholic schools, the aging of Religious Communities, and the scarcity of new vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life, who is tending the flock of the poor and abandoned youth?

SLIDE 23 – CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

Our cities may not teem with displaced children and teens who are, literally-speaking, homeless, but who, nonetheless, are often left to their own devices while their mother works 2 or 3 jobs;

SLIDES 24 & 25 – SEATED ON WALL/LEANING ON WALL

who are left fatherless in a world where commitment, fidelity, the significance of family have been all but destroyed or so mangled as to be unrecognizable or incomprehensible;

SLIDE 26 –HANGING OUT ON STREET

who turn to gangs to find “family”;

SLIDE 27 – GANG MEMBERS

who may go to school but come out practically illiterate;

SLIDES 28 & 29– SMOKING POT/DRINKING

who find it far more “assuring,” “rewarding,” and monetarily profitable to run drugs “freeing” them of the restrictions, the sacrifices, and the self-discipline that study demands so as to acquire honest employment;

SLIDE 30 – GRADUATION

or who successfully complete college and are still unable to find work.

SLIDE 31 – HELP!

SLIDE 32 – TRIED TO GO IT ALONE

How can we possibly respond to such challenges? Certainly, as one person, all alone, we would feel powerless – what can one person do, we say? Maybe a team approach...

SLIDE 33 - STRENNA 2015

C. Video

SLIDE 34 – GOOD CHRISTIAN AND HONEST CITIZEN

We are called as a team, indeed, one team united to and collaborating with many other teams within our Salesian Family to bring souls to Christ; to burn with pastoral charity, that “core and synthesis of our Salesian spirituality” (*Strenna* 2014, 3); to raise up “Honest citizens of earth and happy inhabitants of Heaven” and we are called to do so in communion and collaboration with others – as Association, as Salesian Family, as Church, as men and women of good will.

As Don Bosco said in your first Rule: “Good [Christians] have at all times seen the necessity of uniting in order to help one another in doing good and in avoiding evil. This is the example that the faithful of the early Church left us. Faced with impending dangers every day, they did not give up. United as one heart and one soul, they encouraged one another to be steadfast in the faith and to stand ready to overcome the assaults that relentlessly threatened them. This is also what the Lord taught us when he said: ‘Feeble forces that unite become strong. A single strand may be easily broken, but a three-ply cord is hard to break: *Vis unita fortior; funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.*’

SLIDE 35 – VIS UNITA – 4 ORIGINAL GROUPS OF SALESIAN FAMILY

This is exactly what secular people do to further their temporal interests. Should then the children of light be less farsighted than the children of darkness? Certainly not! We who live as Christians in these

turbulent times must likewise unite in a spirit of prayer, charity and zeal, using all possible means that our religion makes available to us. We must strive to stamp out, or at least diminish, the evil that puts at risk the moral life, without which civil society itself collapses.” (PVA, 118)

SLIDE 36 – “LAS FUERZAS DEBILES...”

We can still follow Don Bosco’s advice today for it is just as relevant now as in the 1800s. He will help us find inside ourselves and in communion with each other, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the courage to respond to the challenges before us with his energy and zeal and that of Mother Mazzarello in a way adapted to our times. We can learn from Don Chavez (and now Don Angel), Mother Yvonne, and our World Delegates the way forward so as to find “greater significance through your renewed *Project of Apostolic Life*.”

SLIDE 37 – DREAM OF 9 YEARS OLD

III. How Would Don Bosco Respond?

A. Dream

How can we address the pressing needs of our young people and their yearnings, even if unacknowledged or unexpressed, for God, for peace, and for security? First and foremost, if Don Bosco were here today, he would dream of a better world than the one existing around him. His vision would not be narrow, parochial, or short-sighted. Instead, it would be an open, daring, practical, and incisive one in his life, bringing him to take action to make the world he envisions become a reality.

SLIDE 38 – WHO ARE WE?

Nor would it be limited by fears of inadequacy, impossibility, or reluctance to “let go” of inessentials because he knows that the Lord and our Blessed Mother are always answering his prayers and are providing him with exactly what he needs at any given time because he’s doing their work.²

SLIDES 39 & 40 – APOSTLES/POPE FRANCIS

B. Physical, Educational, and Emotional Needs

We, as “other Don Bosco”s, have the explicit call to be evangelizers and catechists to the most poor and abandoned youth who have no one to care for their souls. Food, shelter, education (in reference to secular education), clothing, and all such needs, ARE, of course, essentials in life and we must be concerned with meeting these needs of the young and the poor (Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello certainly were!) for these are concrete ways to love them and help them “know that they are loved.” However, we are not to stop there – we are not called to be mere social workers or do-gooders. Instead, we must have the courage to go the next step and to lead souls to Christ with and through Mary, Help of Christians’ intercession.³

SLIDE 41 – BARTHOLOMEW GARELLI & DON BOSCO

C. Spiritual Needs

Call to mind Don Bosco’s meeting with Bartholomew Garelli and Mother Mazzarello’s ingenious action to keep the girls away from the dangerous aspects of the festivities of Carnevale. Don Bosco’s questions went straight to the heart of the matter: do you know your catechism, your prayers? And when he found out how little Bartholomew had learned or could remember, what did he do? He set about teaching him the Sign of

the Cross, entrusting all that would come about to Our Lady in that first Hail, Mary, and then inviting him – and his friends –

SLIDE 42 – DON BOSCO TEACHING CATECHISM

back so he could teach them their prayers, and the catechism, so they could begin a relationship with the Lord and Our Lady.

SLIDE 43 – MOTHER MAZZARELLO

And Mother Mazzarello organized a dance in the convent – something utterly unheard of – as an alternative to the dances going on in town to help the girls preserve the precious virtue of chastity. This wouldn't be a bad idea for today, either!

SLIDE 44 – MISION S. RAFAEL 1890

Don Bosco's vision of everyone's vocation can be summed up quite simply. Our primary vocation is to save our own soul. Our secondary one is to help others save their soul. That's it. It's that simple. Mother Mazzarello was a kindred soul to Don Bosco in this. From the start their vision was all-inclusive. It was not relegated to Priests and Religious to care for these matters. The laity was involved in both branches of the Family from the very beginning.

SLIDE 45 – TIMELINE

D. Collaboration

Just how vast was this vision? It encompassed all people, in all places, from all walks of life, united as one in the Body of Christ, under Mary's Mantle, as faithful Sons and Daughters of the Church – who helped each other on the way to Paradise. Moreover, it is one that hinged directly on committing oneself to follow the path to sanctity that God had marked out for that person: whether as a Priest, a Religious, or a lay person.

SLIDE 46 – GROUP SHOTS

Further, it was a vision that was not limited to adults – the very young who were being served were also engaged in this mission to their peers!⁴ [But that's another discussion entirely (and one that DOES need to be furthered, by the way, but not here.) You might invite Fr. Abe to your Centers to share with you the vision of the Salesian Youth Movement.]

IV. Where Do Cooperators Fit In?

Given this vision, it is obvious that the Cooperators have an integral role to play in this plan. In the earliest still extant copy of the Constitutions written for the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales, dating to 1867, Don Bosco included *an Appendix* about "Extern Salesians."

SLIDE 47, PART I – PVA: VOCATION - TRUE SALESIAN

He wrote: "Anyone, even while living in the world, in his home, in the heart of his family, can belong to *this Society*." (translated from the Latin; italics mine) Never was this lay branch of the Family an after-thought or a later inspiration. The Cooperators have shared 100% in the Salesian apostolate and in importance from the very beginning for you were actually the first group around Don Bosco assisting him in his mission and are one of the four founded directly by Don Bosco himself.

SLIDE 47, PART 2: PVA – BAPTIZED

A. Baptized

By virtue of our Baptism, we are disciples, apostles, and missionaries in our very nature. You have chosen to deepen that Baptismal call by accepting God's invitation to commit yourselves as Cooperators in His work. (PVA, 48) It is this vocation that defines your lives (PVA, 24) and must inform your choices – not only those of everyday life, meeting only the needs that present themselves in your roles as parents, grandparents, co-workers, and friends who gather on Sundays to worship or who meet once a month to share with other like-minded individuals, as important and as meaningful as these may be.

SLIDE 48 – VISION

B. Associate

Being a Cooperator calls you to far greater commitments than that of just being Good Christians and Honest Citizens in yourselves. It calls you to seek out and save those who are lost – lost on the path to Heaven. This can be right within your own family, yes, but it must also take on a more universal dimension.

SLIDE 49 – PVA: VOCATION TO POOR AND ABANDONED YOUNG

Of course, the quantity of time and of energy, and the type and depth of involvement any one Cooperator can give changes as health situations and life circumstances change. (PVA, 70 and 71) This is not a problem.

SLIDE 50 – ALESSANDRINA

There is a model of Cooperator holiness for every situation in Alessandrina da Costa

SLIDE 51 – NINO

and Nino Baglieri in the offering of their infirmities,

SLIDE 52 – ATTILIO

in Attilio Giordani in untiring zeal at the Oratory/Parish and at home,

SLIDE 53 – DOROTEA

and in Dorotea Chopitea, a tremendous benefactor of the Salesians, giving freely of her wealth, thus helping to found and keep running so many apostolic initiatives for the benefit of the poor and needy. Though very different in HOW they were able to live the Cooperator vocation, still the goal was always the same: do good through offering your life, your sufferings, your prayers, your talents and resources for the salvation of souls.

SLIDE 54 – BENCHMARKS

As Association, as Center, as Province, however, the overall face of the Cooperators, the self-awareness of the depth and the demands of the call must be understood in the fullest sense.

SLIDE 55 – SALESIAN FAMILY TREE

You, along with the SDB, the FMA, and ADMA, must, according to Don Chavez, be the models, the witnesses, the guides, and the guarantors of the Charism to all the other 26 Groups of the Family. (*Salesian Family Charter*, Art. 3)

SLIDE 56 – THE ASSCC

C. Salesian

A Salesian Cooperator is, by no means, a “second-class citizen” in the Salesian world. Nor is he/she one who needs to be “told what to do” by the Religious, waiting on our directives. No, the Cooperator Association is an autonomous, public, juridical, ecclesiastical Association of professional people who are capable of making the decisions and choices necessary to carry out the mission entrusted to them. (*Code of Canon Law*, canons 298-329)

SLIDE 57 – CODE OF CANON LAW

Certainly, the vowed Religious who are your Delegates should always be the fullest “measuring stick” of fidelity to Don Bosco’s charism, mission, and spirituality, as your Statutes and Regulations clearly state.

SLIDE 58 – DELEGATES

While you look to them (us) as spiritual animators, as the guarantors of your fidelity to the charism, as the “go-to” persons for Salesian formation and training, still this should follow the model of the teacher who trains people so that they, in their turn, may succeed and may be equipped with all they need to pass this learning on to others – in full fidelity. (PVA, 45, 90, and 93)

SLIDE 59 – EASTERN US MAP

It has been made painfully apparent that this autonomy in communion and this sense of being an ecclesiastical Association have not always been understood. When the FMA or the SDB have withdrawn from places, more often than not the Cooperator Center disbanded because the Cooperators felt “abandoned” and incapable of carrying on the Salesian work.

SLIDE 60 – PVA SPIRIT OF UNITY

On the other extreme, some individuals, or sometimes a group of them, have felt they can “free lance” – that they are able to exist and have the identity of Cooperators while divorcing themselves from their connection with and responsibility to the Province, the Association in general, and the Family as a whole.

SLIDE 61 – 3 CIRCLES

V. Direction to Move Forward

To avoid these two extremes, to respond with renewed fervor, renewed commitment, and renewed apostolate in today’s society as a true juridical, ecclesiastical, lay Association, the following are needed:

1. recalling to mind Don Bosco’s original vision of the Salesian Cooperator
2. being made aware of the alterations to this vision that have occurred over the years
3. returning to the original vision through a study of the new PVA

SLIDE 62 – DON ANGEL

In addition, and most importantly, we all need to look to the Rector Major and listen to his words and his guidelines for he is the Center of Unity and the ultimate authority on all that is in faithful keeping with Don Bosco’s charism, spirituality, and mission for the entire Family. He speaks to us all through his talks and

writings which need to be shared, studied, and discussed in your Centers as one component of your on-going formation.

SLIDE 63 – WORLD COUNCIL

He also avails himself of your World Council to help your Association maintain its fidelity to Don Bosco today. The transmission of all that comes to us from the World Council needs to make it to the level of the individual Cooperator through the mediation of our Regional Consulta, and our Provincial and Local Councils.

SLIDE 64 - 67 – STRUCTURE OF ASSOCIATION

Communication up and down the line needs to be a priority and guaranteed secure if the Association is going to be understood properly and be effective in its impact on society through its unified witness and fidelity. Since this need was noted, another body – not governmental – was needed. Thus, the Regional Consultas were established. Our Cooperators of the eastern United States belong to the Interamerica Region, encompassing North and Central America.

And here we see the Provinces and the countries which comprise them in the southern area of our Region ----- as well as those of the northern area.

Our Consulta is composed of the people pictured here: the Province Coordinators, the Regional World Councilor, Representatives of the northern area and the southern area, the Regional Coordinator, Regional Treasurer, and Regional Secretary, and the Regional SDB and FMA Delegates. They pose here with our two World Delegates: Don Giuseppe Casti, SDB, and Sr. Leslye Sandigo, FMA.

SLIDE 68 – PVA SPIRIT

Having accomplished these tasks, we, FMA, SDB, and Cooperators, can set about responding to the challenges placed before us in the local Church and in the Salesian mission for the all-encompassing well-being of the poor – most especially, of the poor and abandoned youth right where we live, while never forgetting those world-wide.

SLIDE 69 – EARTH – NEW FORMS OF SOLIDARITY

SLIDES 70-80

- A. New PVA**
 - 1. History: 70-78**
 - 2. Congress Resolution: 79**
 - 3. Today: 80**

SLIDE 81 – THE PVA IS A PROJECT

The PVA is a PROJECT. The very name implies that it has a dynamism, it requires work, knowledge, and skills in order to make this project become a reality. Study and reflection on its contents, comparing it with how the Cooperator lives his or her daily life, endeavoring to mold and shape one's life according to it are all necessary to be true to the vocation. This is both a personal task and one in which the Association offers assistance and guidance through the Formators, in communication and harmony with the Delegates.

SLIDE 82 – OUR GUIDES

In addition to nurturing our spiritual and charismatic lives with Formation Days and Retreats offered by the Association, and with the writings of the Rector Major, we also need to be guided by those of our Holy Father, of Mother General, of other Cooperators who have taken on roles of service in the Association, and of our Delegates. These people will alert us as to how the Family is to grow and to move forward and as to what challenges the Church and society face today. They will also indicate to us how to respond efficaciously.

SLIDE 83 – POPE FRANCIS

B. Call from Pope Francis, our Rectors Major, and Mother Yvonne

Indeed, Pope Francis has been challenging the Church in many ways to seek new ways of answering the call of the poor and abandoned by becoming a Church “dirtied and smelling like the sheep” because we’re there with the people who need us.

SLIDE 84 – MOTHER YVONNE

Fr. Chavez and Mother Yvonne, and now Fr. Angel, have all picked up on what he is calling us to and have told us that all of these issues strike at the heart of the Salesian mission and that we must act to answer his call.

SLIDE 85 – OBAMACARE PROTEST/GIRL SCOUTS’ ORGANIZATION STANCE

C. New Consciousness as Family

Within our own USA, we also need to use the elements of our Democratic system of government to effect local, State, and National changes so that our laws and civic practices are in conformity with Gospel values. Our system *can* work – as evidenced by the squashing of the “Obamacare” mandate regarding contraceptives, etc.

This is not the only issue around this topic. Everyone heard of that one because of the media blitz. How many have heard of the Girl Scouts' relationship with Planned Parenthood?

Catholics have been affiliated with Girl Scouts for 100 years and there are an estimated 400,000 Catholic girls among the nation's 3 million Girl Scouts. In the past few years, questions about the organization have sparked online discussions, boycotts of Girl Scout cookies and the ousting of troops from Catholic parishes.

Concerns have been raised about the Girl Scouts' relationship with Planned Parenthood and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, known as WAGGGS. There also have been questions about the organization's policy on human sexuality and contraception and its program materials and resources. The bishops' committee spent one year gathering information about concerns and another year in dialogue with Girl Scout leaders in an effort to clarify the issues.

In a question-and-answer section, the Girl Scouts said they have "no official relationship" with Planned Parenthood. They also said the way GSUSA is structured does not allow the national office "to prohibit local councils or troops from collaborating with or forming their own local relationships with Planned Parenthood" or other organizations.

Regarding WAGGGS -- an international group based in London that describes itself as advocating for the education of girls and young women and promoting "sexual and reproductive health/rights" -- GSUSA said

it "only participates in select WAGGGS programming" and does not have "the ability or purview to criticize, explicitly distance itself from, or change particular advocacy positions within WAGGGS." Its contributions to the organization are only from investment income and not from cookie sales, dues or registration fees.

But who can guarantee that it will continue to work if we do not continue to educate our young people in Christian morality and ethics? And how long will there be voters, constituents to vote according to a rightly-informed conscience and to stand up for God's laws? Worse yet – would such laws even be questioned or cause anyone to raise an eyebrow if consciences have not been rightly formed?

SLIDE 86 – ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE PROVINCE

D. Our One Focus

We need to realize the strength we have in numbers and become more visible and incisive in our world as Association and as Salesian Family. Our one focus must continue to be the salvation of souls.

SLIDES 87 & 88 – THE HOLY BIBLE, ET AL./HOSPICE OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES

We must all re-commit ourselves to serious evangelization and catechesis and oratory within our Salesian works and diocesan parishes. As much as I regret having to share these things, I do so to make us aware of the true dangers that lurk in the wings if we do not make conscious choices to go against the tide of our society and to stand firm in our own spirituality. The comments/situations I relate now are true. I heard or witnessed them first hand and come from committed Catholics, Salesians, sad to say.

SLIDE 89 – SAD FACE

We need to realize the strength we have in numbers and become more visible and incisive in our world as Association and as Salesian Family. Our one focus must continue to be the salvation of souls. We must all re-commit ourselves to serious evangelization and catechesis and oratory within our Salesian works and diocesan parishes. As much as I regret having to share these things, I do so to make us aware of the true dangers that lurk in the wings if we do not make conscious choices to go against the tide of our society and to stand firm in our own spirituality. The comments/situations I relate now are true. I heard or witnessed them first hand and come from committed Catholics, Salesians, sad to say. (As a one-time faithful watcher of *Dragnet*, "the names and some places have been changed to protect the innocent.")

First, the bad news:

CITE YOUR OWN EXAMPLES

SLIDE 90 – SMILEY FACE

Now the good news: CITE HOW SOME OF THOSE ABOVE HAD SAVING MOMENTS *Deo gratias!*

SLIDES 91 & 92 – PISANA CHAPEL/THE VATICAN

We Salesians need to find in prayer, in Mass, in the Sacrament of Confession, in devotion to Mary Help of Christians, in the Preventive System, in companionship with each other and in fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church the strength to live and give witness to our Faith and to these hallmarks of our Salesian spirituality. We need to be courageous enough today not to give in to human respect or to the poisonous attitude of "political correctness" or the crippling, "getting-me-off-the-hook" one of "not wanting to offend anyone."

SLIDE 93 – FRANCIS DE SALES

Of course, the safeguard against being offensive or disrespectful of others, of overstepping proper bounds, is in living our Salesian charism with the gentleness, kindness, and respectfulness of St. Francis de Sales who, nonetheless, never ignored, forgot, or pushed aside his courageous zeal in proclaiming the Faith and calling others back to it. For this, we need the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray for it.

VI. The Costs – the “*Cetera Tolle*”

Such a commitment will cause us to strike out on new paths, with renewed energy and vigor because, just like that young man in the video, we can’t just walk by and do nothing when we see a need – or, worse yet – not move to look where the need is. But what are the costs to us in this? What is the “*cetera tolle*”?

SLIDE 94 – PRESENCES IN EASTERN USA AND CANADA

1. We will need to try again. It has been said that the Cooperators, the Past Pupil Association, ADMA, etc., will never work in the US. Why is that? People say this but they don’t have answers – at least, I’ve never received any when I’ve asked. Is it that we have too many things pulling us in too many directions? Is it that our worlds are filled with all sorts of memberships, things we belong to, activities, and responsibilities? Is it because we’re just too busy working for the sake of our own families or schools or other works?

Whatever the cause – or causes – may I encourage us all to look at the activities we engage in. Are there things that can be eliminated – good even though they may be – so that it is possible to focus on just a few, or one or two, so as to maximize commitment and, hopefully, effectiveness? Are there things that really sap us of time but are not truly essential to God’s plan for us and our vocational commitments? Do we realize the full demands when we say “to be a Cooperator is to live a Vocation”? Prioritizing, cutting back, or letting go of some activities might cost us – but then, is this not the “*cetera tolle*”?⁵

2. We will need to ask and face honestly some hard questions: are we as individuals, Centers, Province, and members of the Salesian Family actually seeking out the poor and abandoned youth to help them? Are we carrying forward Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello’s mission of evangelization and of helping every person find and follow his/her vocation? Are we a visible force for good in our Church and in the world – in the areas of politics, economics, and education – to name but a few?

SLIDE 95 – FOOD FOR THOUGHT

VII. Conclusion

What risks do we run here today? Most of all we run the risk of participating in this Formation Day and then going home to “life as usual.” This is the greatest risk we run – that of leaving here just as we came and of being re-absorbed by our busy lives and worlds. Let this not happen.

You received already a number of months ago your renewed Rule, the *Project of Apostolic Life*, the way to sanctity traced out for you by the Holy Spirit, through Don Bosco, and through your Association and your Delegates around Don Chavez. Have you been taking it in hand, reflecting on it, praying with it? Has it become the source of your formation at your Center’s meetings and for the Aspirants discerning if the Cooperator vocation is for them? Has it become a source of renewal and deeper commitment to your

vocation for you as an individual, for you as a Center? What a great gift this would be to give to Don Bosco for his 200th birthday this year!

SLIDE 96 – HEAVEN

May Our Heavenly Father bless our endeavors as Mary, the Help of Christians, continues to guide and lead us to Her Son. And may we be open to the breath of the Spirit and the inspiration of our Guardian Angels, who in union with Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, and the Church Universal are constantly praying for us and encouraging us to be bold disciples and apostles in our world TODAY! God bless you all!

Endnotes

¹Don Giuseppe Casti, SDB, World Delegate, in his talk prepared for the World Congress in 2012, speaking of the necessity of solid initial and on-going formation, writes: "... to respond to the always new demands of persons and of places in a world and in a Church in rapid evolution. Epochal changes, in fact, have shaken society and the Church and which demand that the Salesian Cooperator become aware of them. The demands of the apostolate in our present world have brought all the groups and movements to insist, more than once, on the importance of a solid formation and on the need for the apostle to maintain in himself the breath of the Spirit. The Church has considered it useful to confirm this fact in an official manner: the Conciliar Decree of the Apostolate of the Laity, *Actuositatem Apostolicam*, dedicates an entire chapter to formation. The lay person lives in the world, and, therefore, must understand the dynamics and the changes which are in progress.

Today, the changes are enormous and happen at a dizzying rate. There have been those who have affirmed that we live changes that are so accelerated that every decade inaugurates a new century. It is no surprise that in these last 50 years more inventions have been produced and more developments made than in all the rest of the history of mankind. Just think of the Internet and of genetic engineering. The experts say that the world in which we live today is called "the crisis of the crises." We no longer live in an epoch of changes, but in the change of an epoch.

At least in the West, this crisis is hitting all the areas of life: the family, the school, religion, economics, politics, culture, and even science. Two great currents are meeting head-on: modernity and post-modernity. These give two completely different visions of the world and of life. In postmodern thought, the center of morality is the person himself, the individual, the "I". An individual's tastes and feelings shape him and his actions.

In our formative path it is important that we always keep present before us this cultural and social reality, and at the same time, know how to interpret them and have criteria which will guide us."

²Mother Yvonne Reungoat, FMA, writing to her Daughters in her Circular Letter of May 24, 2014: "Today, we too are called to revive our missionary vocation, to go out to meet the people and the young. We must be frontier communities, open and daring in orienting ourselves, as Church, toward the [fringes] of existence, of the young, of suffering, of injustice, toward places hidden in the soul where every person experiences the joys and sufferings of being alive.

There are many young people around us who need a presence. We are called to seek paths of prevention so that they will not enter into situations that are devastating for their lives and their future. The [awareness] of our limitations [motivates] us to widen the net to people of good will who can reach where we cannot. In the Salesian Family, there are many resources that are not always as utilized as they could be. May we have the

courage to call the young and adults to collaborate in this mission based on the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*, and create synergy in order to multiply our strength.

I understand that it is not always easy to be daring consecrated women, ready to live the precariousness of being on the frontier. Pope Francis encourages us saying that ours is not a laboratory faith, but a journeying faith, a historical faith. This allows us to inhabit the frontiers of thought and of culture, to favor dialogue, to give the reason for the hope that is in us. Remaining on the frontier leads to finding the road for becoming a home for and with the young.”

³From volume 2 of the *Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*, beginning on p. 67: the Oratory was to admit not only the uneducated in order to teach them, but also the unruly in order to convert them, as long as they did not give scandal.” Its purpose was to: “entertain youngsters, especially apprentices, on Sunday and Holy Days with pleasant and wholesome recreation” after they’d attended religious services. As Don Bosco put it: “Confession and Communion are our two principal practices of piety; therefore, on Sundays and Holy Days, boys shall be given an opportunity to approach these two great Sacraments” (not to mention the rest: the Office of the BVM, Bible or Church History lessons, Catechism, Vespers, a moral sermon, Benediction, and the recitation of the rosary). To anyone who criticized that there were too many practices of the piety and the boys would soon dislike them, DB responded: “I have called this place an ‘oratory’ to make it STRIKINGLY CLEAR that prayer is [ultimately] [sic] the only means on which we can rely. We recite the rosary because from the very beginning I have put myself and my boys under the direct protection of the Blessed Virgin.”

⁴Bl. Charles de Foucauld: ““God does not ask all souls to show their love by the same works, to climb to heaven by the same ladder, to achieve goodness in the same way of life. What sort of work, then, must I do? Which is my road to heaven? In what kind of life am I to sanctify myself?””

⁵Bishop Oscar Romero: ““Those who want to bear the mark of the Spirit and the fire that Christ baptizes with must take the risk of renouncing everything and seeking only God’s reign and justice.””