

**CRITERIA FOR ANIMATION
AND GOVERNANCE
OF THE ASSOCIATION
OF THE SALESIAN COOPERATORS**



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**THE SALESIAN CHOICE FOR ANIMATION
IN THE LIFE OF THE ASSOCIATION**

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LEADERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION

CHAPTER I
THE SALESIAN CHOICE FOR ANIMATION
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FOREWORD

These “Criteria for Animation and Governance of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators” are strictly correlated to the “Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of Salesian Cooperators”. All Salesian animation is a dynamic process which develops along certain fundamental dimensions which are both integrating and complementary aspects among themselves and of the process. The focal point where the formation guidelines and these criteria converge is the Preventive System.

The dimensions mentioned above form coherent anthropological, pedagogical, and spiritual frames of reference for accompanying young Aspirants and adults along the delicate process of growth in their humanity and in their faith. The *Project of Apostolic Life*, in its organic wholeness, integrates these different aspects and elements within one sole process, oriented to a clearly-identified goal: “Christ come to full stature” - Man, Christian, and Salesian. It lays its foundation on these three fundamental aspects which we call "dimensions."

It is these dimensions that are the vital and dynamic content for the formation of the Salesian Cooperator. They point out the purpose, goal, and call inherent to the vocation. Taken separately, each has its own specific objective which qualifies it; still, each is intimately connected with the others. They ought not be considered as needing to be studied separately, in progressive stages, one following the other, but are to be considered in an integrated manner – all contributing to one dynamic of growth in the Salesian Cooperator.

Girding this framework are precise anthropological, educational, and theological visions: growth implies an interweaving of human maturity and the Christian sense of life, always following the logic of a journey. Each dimension recalls, at every point, both work and service. In this sense we consider the dimensions as cutting across all lines in the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

These dimensions can be thought of as communicating vessels which not only ideally recall the others but which also nourish each another. Even if each is described separately, and in succession, it still behooves to note that together they form one whole: each brings its own specific nature to the whole while receiving from the others an orientation and some unique accentuations. They are inseparable and qualify each other in a reciprocal manner, such that one cannot be developed without explicit reference to the others. They are presented according to the logic of a system, wherein the dynamic of one element affects all the others. This unity and correlation must be made explicit both in the objectives and in the strategies for animation at all Levels: Local, Provincial, Regional, and World.

The three dimensions taken together as a whole constitute the internal dynamic of the *Project of Apostolic Life* and of the Criteria for Animation. They give the framework for defining choices which can help us elaborate, together with the Salesian Cooperators and within the concrete situations of life, well-balanced proposals for formation and for animation.

A. Educating with the Heart and in Animating Style

The Salesian spirit constitutes the decisive point of reference for our way of thinking, acting, and sanctifying ourselves as Salesian Cooperators. It is also the foundational principle, the guiding light, that animates the educational, pastoral, and spiritual projects of those who accept responsibilities of leadership within the Association, with a spirit of service and in fidelity to Don Bosco's charism.

This style of animation entails the following. The leader must employ:

- *a way of thinking about the human person* as one who is capable, through the use of his/her own interior resources, of being fully involved in and responsible for the processes which regard him/her;
- *a method which looks to what is positive* - the riches and the potentialities which each Cooperator bears within, promoting them and offering him/her a proposal for growth;
- *a style of journeying* with the Cooperators which makes suggestions, motivates, and helps them grow in daily life through a relationship which is at once liberating and authoritative; and
- *a vision directed toward the ultimate and overall objective: to give to each person the joy of living fully* and the courage to hope. Animation has a concrete face – that of the leader-animator. His/Hers is a precise and indispensable role.

The Leader-Animator

Even if this role varies according to the particular situations of each Center, the following can be stated categorically. The Leader-Animator:

- *encourages the formation of the Cooperators of the Center and the progress of its searching, reflections, activities, and ideals;*
- *helps, by means of his/her competence and experience, to overcome any crises in the Center* and to weave personal relationships among its members;
- *presents to the Cooperators elements of critiquing and of deepening knowledge*, so that they might know how to define their proposals, desires, and searching;
- *fosters communication* and connection between the members of the Local Center and the Province; and
- *accompanies each individual member* in his or her process of human and Christian growth.

The Center must also care for its own insertion into society and the Church. When considering this aspect, the Salesian Association experience and its animation must promote:

- *a preparation and an accompaniment* which render the Cooperator capable of participating in the life of society, undertaking personal responsibilities in moral, social, and professional areas, and of cooperating with whatever works to build a society worthier of Man;

- *an active insertion into civic life*, through the promotion of the Center and that of the entire Association at the service of the common good within society; and

- *an insertion into the ecclesial community*, helping the Salesian Cooperators to nurture a sincere love for it because it is the communion of all the believers in Christ and the universal sacrament of salvation.

B. The Specificity of Each Dimension and of the Criteria for Animation

1. The human dimension

The human dimension (educational-cultural) is in intimate relationship with the dimension of education to the Faith. Education is the place and the means to offer the good news of the Gospel, the message that is incarnated in the concrete culture and which requires gradual processes of assumption in harmony with each person's abilities and capacities for maturation. Education requires that, starting from concrete situations, we develop strategies to reach full human maturity. The gaze of the animator is not exclusively focused on the religious question or on the rapport with the Faith and with the Church. It is open to the entire experience: it intercepts all the hopes and the growing pains of constructing oneself together with others, and of insertion into society and the world of work. The faith proposal, on the other hand, is interwoven with the objectives of human maturation because there is where believing makes sense. The Salesian gaze, therefore, is focused on educational concerns and the exercise of an educational wisdom guided and directed by faith.

Caring for the human, educational-cultural, dimension

• helping the Cooperators build a strong identity

In a fragmented world inclined toward what is immediate and marked by relativism and by a lack of principles, we Salesian Cooperators believe that the *Project of Apostolic Life* can help form strong personalities in the Cooperators (see Mt. 7:24-27); therefore, let us help them overcome difficulties. We need to see to the convergence of all actions taken for the formation of a unified personality: this is an operational choice wherein all contributions are integrated and fortify each other mutually, in harmony with the aspirations and the dimensions of the person, arranged in a proper hierarchy.

Looking at the Cooperators with the eyes of Jesus, let us help them to:

- *form a moral conscience and foster the capacity for ethical discernment* so they can make responsible and properly-motivated judgments;

- *grow in autonomy* so as to meet life with coherency and responsibility;

- *acquire a rich patrimony of values and virtues* which are in conformity with the Gospel; and

- *compare themselves with credible role models* from among Cooperators who have Jesus the Good Shepherd and Don Bosco as their primary guides. The quality of the life of these models has a great impact on the journey toward a loving and faithful adherence to Christ.

- **accompanying the Cooperators as they mature in their affective and emotional world**

This is a world which at times finds it difficult to express itself - even if its role is a fundamental one. A person's affections and feelings are guiding criteria for growth in the ability to relate and also for one's ethical judgments - but they often proceed along a parallel path to rationality. Certainly, the affective and sexual areas show themselves ever more relevant in connection with the formation of the personality. It is necessary for us to help manage emotions and feelings and for couples to live their experience as a means of growth.

A person's integral education will bring him/her to appreciate the authentic values of his/her affectivity (respect for oneself and for others, the dignity of the person, the transparency of relationships, fidelity to each other, and the dignity of Christian marriage and of the family) and sexuality as decisive and crucial values along the path to maturity.

Caring for these criteria means:

- *creating environments which are rich in affective-communicative exchanges.* Cooperators seek authentic relationships in their families, with their friends, in their Centers, and in their work place: relationships which help one feel at ease and able to move forward with serenity while following one's own path;
- *helping families* with the heterogeneous situations in which they find themselves, contributing those characteristics proper to our charism: familiarity, constant availability for dialogue, and closeness; and
- *accompanying the Cooperators along the different stages of their life*, fostering attitudes proper to service and free self-giving.

- **promoting a culture which takes its inspiration from Christian Humanism**

One views the World and Man differently when his or her vision takes its inspiration from this rich humanistic patrimony. Let us bring about the positive development of cultural and religious realities through the union of faith and life. This requires:

- *valuing all that is good in one's actual culture*, being careful not to fall into a simplistic or excessively critical evaluation of the reality of the young;
- *promoting the culture of life*, opposing all the destructive tendencies of relativism, hedonism, and pragmatism; and
- *creating a culture of solidarity and of involvement and commitment*, so that it bring us to overcome difficult situations by fighting against every form of injustice.

- **working for human promotion and competency in the professional area and in humanism**

A professional manner must bring one to be at the service of governance and of animation, both within the Association and in society, and must also be carried out with increasing competence and true

satisfaction, aware of one's limits and respectful of the roles of others, and conscious of one's own contribution to growth in social and political commitment.

Furthermore, it is necessary to form stable attitudes and structures in one's personality (self-esteem, socialization, participation, autonomy, solidarity, responsibility, and a strong will), which permit us to act as free persons and which orient them to a critical understanding of reality and to communion in solidarity with people.

- **helping to reflect on the reasonableness of one's own faith**

In order to contribute to the construction of the society in which we live, it is essential to cultivate an intelligent reading of the Christian message and of the world in which one lives. This happens through:

- *an education of attitudes* which are at the base of openness to God (to know how to enter into oneself; to know oneself ever more and better as regards one's own limitations and possibilities; to know how to live with awe and wonder, appreciating all that is good, great, and beautiful in oneself and around oneself);

- *a critical and adequate religious formation* which enlightens the mind and strengthens the heart; and

- *an attitude of openness*, of respect, and of dialogue among the different Christian confessions and the plurality of religious expressions.

2. The Christian dimension

Evangelizing and educating is the first and fundamental purpose of our Association. Our *Project of Apostolic Life* is decisively oriented to the full maturity of the Cooperators and of their growth in the Church, certain that the education of one's Christian dimension is central to the development of the person. Evangelization carries the good news of Christ to all the strata of humanity to renew it from within (see *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18) so that believing "with a conscious and vigorous faith" (*Porta Fidei*, 8) they discover its intrinsic joy. The journey towards maturation in the Faith today requires a longer amount of time, and involvement on the part of the community which goes far beyond just catechesis. To accompany the loving and faithful adherence to the Faith and the Christian journey, one thinks today in terms of initiation. This holds true even for adults. Faith can no longer be taken for granted. Don Bosco passed on his passion for the salvation of the young lived in constant commitment to a simple catechesis – one that is essential, adapted to the conditions, the age, and the culture of the young, and joined to the other educational proposals and recreational proposals of the oratories. Christian formation doesn't happen at the end of a course of preparation but, rather, constitutes the heart of the entire formative proposal. Don Bosco did not distinguish between pre-evangelization and catechesis but, as soon as he encountered a young boy, he immediately invited him to a journey in Christian life. If Christian formation is not integrated into life, it remains extraneous and incomprehensible, it is soon just "put up with" and later abandoned.

- **fostering the development of the religious dimension of the person**

To beget, purify, and deepen the desire for a further journey of faith is the task of those who are in leadership in the Association. We help the Cooperators, through various proposals, to live attitudes typical of a religious experience: awe and wonder, contemplation, openness to Mystery, the sense of free-giving, and apostolic commitment.

To achieve this, one needs to become a “companion on the journey” with the Cooperators, sharing with them the taxing journey of growth and the deepening of their life experience. For the Cooperators, this terrain is, of necessity, the one of their growth and of related tasks for the construction of their identity. For this reason, we hold these criteria to be fundamental:

- **inspiring, accompanying, and deepening the faith experience**

Faith experience is a personal, loving, and faithful personal adherence to Christ which leads one to see life through the eyes of Jesus. It is important to develop a systematic itinerary of education to the faith. He who is familiar with the process of human maturation realizes that the integration of faith and life demands a great amount of attention and effort. We seek to draw near to the religious experience by putting into action some processes which help one achieve unity of faith and life:

- *proclaiming faith in a meaningful way*, in all the experiential richness of the Christian message;
- *helping maturation in the Faith* be seen as the attitude which is able to inspire and organize the entire process of human maturation, reinforcing one's loving and faithful adherence to the Lord through personal encounter and spiritual direction;
- *animating well celebrations* which lead one to a true personal relationship with Christ because of their beauty and the depth which they communicate;
- *fostering a personal commitment to live in one's everyday life* all that which is celebrated; and
- *establishing times and creating adequate environments* which foster an encounter with God through paths of interiorization: personal and community prayer, openness to Mystery, contemplation and silence, encounter and comparison with the Word of God lived and shared. This contact with the Word, the efforts in formation, and their integration in the daily prayer of the community are extremely important. The Salesian Cooperators are always more sensitive to a prayerful reading of the Word of God in the form of *Lectio Divina* when Scripture is broken open for them in a language which is appropriate to them and which has incisiveness in their life, by telling the story of who God is, thus revealing to them who they are.

- **Offering the Cooperators gradual experiences of service and apostolic commitment**

So as to make the integration of faith and life come true personally, they themselves must become, according to each one's possibilities, witnesses and evangelizers. We are speaking of a faith which motivates and gives depth to the processes of humanization and promotion of persons according to the model of Jesus Christ.

The social dimension of charity is part and parcel of the education of a person to social and political responsibilities for justice and for the construction of a more just and more human society, discovering in them an inspiration which is completely attuned to the Gospel. A loving and faithful adherence to a faith which grows ever more mature opens one up to a sincere service to Man. The proposal and the witness of solidarity give credibility to the proclamation of the Gospel because they express the potential of humanity. They are already the proclamation of new life in Christ, and they show that the Gospel is for Man, and that the Church has a decisive word to say regarding life, dignity, hope, and Man's future. Don Bosco educated the young to the moral virtues of the honest citizen.

3. The Salesian dimension

The specificity and importance of the experience as Association

Don Bosco valued groups and Associations as educational realities which are capable of multiplying formative activities. As a youth, he himself grew in his "Society of Joy" (*la Società dell'Allegria*) during the time when he was going to school in Chieri; this was his group experience. The sodalities, the societies, the associations, the conferences – each in its own way, with its own interests and objectives which were taken on by its members – were born at the beginning of the Oratory. In the years 1860 to 1870, they were also introduced into the boarding schools and high schools. This dimension of the Salesian educational/catechetical charism is one of its fundamental characteristics. The Preventive System requires an intense and luminous environment wherein all participate and where friendly relationships exist and are enlivened by the presence of animators who promote all constructive forms of activity and group life and concrete initiation into community, civic, political, and ecclesial involvement and commitment.

Developing this dimension demands the following:

- *constructing a family environment*, through appropriate and strategically planned activities in which the pedagogy of closeness, of relationships, and of affection which is shown are lived; i.e., an environment of trust in which the apostolic proposals are credible and able to be undertaken because of the intensity of personal relationships and the atmosphere of shared joy; and
- *the life of the Association in the Center as a privileged environment* in which the Salesian charism is developed and lived: a variety of formative and apostolic proposals, open to all the Cooperators, who are the true creators of the life of the Association. This criterion implies more matters to attend to:
 - *Creating a plurality of proposals and environments* of ample welcome according to the different interests and journeys of the Cooperators, starting from the situation in which they find themselves, and respecting the pace of development possible to them; and
 - *Offering intense moments and opportunities for sharing* of life (retreats, spiritual exercises, study days) as moments for confirming and relaunching the Associative and Salesian choice of the Centers.

The future Cooperator in formation always belongs to a Center and a Province. As a community of persons who are animated by the same apostolic ideal, the Center, especially, (but also the Province) constitutes a precious environment for formation. It is the place of encounter for all those who share the same project. It is a place where people grow together by participating in the life of the Family: example draws in, friendship encourages, the experiences of others enrich, and initiatives carried out together motivate. Each Center ought to be the dynamic nucleus which supports, motivates, orients, and guides and, in this way, contributes efficaciously to its members' *personal* and group formation. In order to reach this point, it is necessary that the Center know how to create an environment of trust and of acceptance among the members.

Within such a context in the Center and the Province, particular responsibilities for formation are assigned to those Cooperators who are qualified and to the Delegate. Given the secular qualification of the Cooperator, the contribution of *qualified Cooperators* to the formation of the other members of the Association cannot be overlooked and, in fact, is a concrete possibility to be valued highly. It is to be remembered that secular Priests and Deacons are part of the Association and, as such, have formative tasks. Alongside them are the *Delegates* who are the spiritual animators and responsible, above all, for Salesian apostolic formation.

C. Social Communications

Today, social communications affect all Salesian presences. Social communications fill the world and determine forms of human living; therefore, it touches the heart of the vocation and mission of the Salesian Cooperator who works on the front lines of promotion and evangelization. It is, therefore, a specific dimension of the Salesian charism. It was essential for Don Bosco; it is a call to each Cooperator; and involvement in it cannot be renounced by the Church or the world of today.

Don Bosco made his untiring activity in the realm of social communications a constitutive element of his being an educator and an apostle of youth and of all people. From Salesian tradition we have learned that social communications are not simply a mass of instruments or material means to be adapted and used; rather, they affect the entire Salesian presence, which is involved and committed to educate and to evangelize, whether through specific works or through different forms of action which influence popular culture and the promotion of adequate social forms. Recalling Don Bosco: "I beg and beseech you, therefore, not to neglect this most important part of our mission." (Circular Letter on the spread of good books, March 19, 1885).

Communicators for and by vocation and mission

As Salesian Cooperators today we ought to, in all our polyhedral apostolic and educational activities, express our firm will to be authentic communicators – communicators, therefore, by vocation and for the educational mission. Our quality as educators and evangelizers requires us to be qualified communicators. Communication fosters charismatic communion and mobilization of the mission. Interpersonal communication between adults and youth, between laity and religious, between those

who are rich in experience and those who are beginning to take the first steps in life, and among all those who have gifts to share interest us most of all. The Preventive System entrusts educational efficacy principally to the direct, face-to-face encounter: an encounter of trust, of friendship, of attentive and interested listening; therefore, it is necessary that we cultivate the capacity to handle the dynamics of relationships. The quality of our interactions can condition in a constructive way, or in a negative way, the formation of the personality; attitudes and educational styles are reflected on emotional states, very often determining behavior. Reflections of the Salesian Family reveal a strengthening of convictions about communication, which is understood in a wide sense, and that the Family is open to a new, more systematic practice in the field of social communications.

In formation plans *and as criteria for animation* certain action lines must be present for this area:

- *formation to critical and educational use of the means of social communications and other new technologies.* Both educators and the young must understand the changes that are in progress and how the means of communication and the cultural sectors function. They must possess a critical sense, a strategic spirit, the capacity for self-regulation, a sense of limits and of respect, a civic sense, as well as autonomy in their regard and knowledge concerning how to make use of them safely and efficaciously;
- *involvement in the production of messages and content which are meant specifically for the young,* utilizing all the means at our disposal so as to make social communications an ever-more educational presence forming mindsets and creating culture;
- *valuing social communications as a new place of meeting.* The technologies of communication change the sense of belonging and the way of meeting, inasmuch as they create more communities into which all those using the Internet are inserted and with devices ever more linked to the life of the young; and
- *promotion and appreciation of all forms and expressions of communication,* including music, theater, movies, television, photography, cartoons, multimedia, and other expressions of art, with a clear educational and evangelizing purpose. It is necessary to animate these communication realities in such a way that they not only offer ever new spaces for free expression and creativity, but also motivate a taste for the beautiful in all those expressions (the visual arts, music, poetry, literature, dance, and theater). Educating to beauty signifies involving the entire sphere of the senses and of the emotions, of the imagination and creativity, and of the capacity to express feelings and sentiments which are proper, as well as an understanding of how others express themselves.

Pope Francis expresses this with great clarity:

Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the “way of beauty” (via pulchritudinis). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of

difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus. This has nothing to do with fostering an aesthetic relativism which would downplay the inseparable bond between truth, goodness and beauty, but rather a renewed esteem for beauty as a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. If, as Saint Augustine says, we love only that which is beautiful, the incarnate Son, as the revelation of infinite beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love. So a formation in the *via pulchritudinis* ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 167)

CHAPTER II

LEADERSHIP IN THE ASSOCIATION

Foreword

Relationship between animation and governance within the Association

A. In fidelity and with a spirit of service

B. Co-responsibility

C. Collegiality

FOREWORD

Relationship between animation and governance within the Association

This chapter will present the figure of one in leadership inasmuch as he/she carries out a role of animation and of governance in the Association.

Statutes Article 35 of the *Project of Apostolic Life* foresees this role when it says that "the governance and animation of the Association is entrusted to its own Local, Provincial, and World Councils...".

At the World Level, the role of animation and governance rests also with the Rector Major as the Supreme Moderator of the Association. In exercising his ministry, the Rector Major avails himself of the World Council of Salesian Cooperators. (PVA, Statutes, Article 24, §2) To the Provincials falls the task of certain governance decisions, which are clearly specified in the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

From this point forward we will call the person who carries out the functions of animation and of governance in the Association "the leader".

A. In fidelity and with a spirit of service

In Statutes Article 22 §1 of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, it is stated clearly what ought to be the fundamental criterion that must guide the one who is called to undertake tasks of responsibility within the Association:

The Salesian Cooperator feels responsible for the common mission and carries it out according to his or her own conditions in life, competencies, and possibilities, giving it valuable and substantial support... If called to take on particular responsibilities, he or she commits him or herself to carry them out with fidelity and in a spirit of service.

Service and fidelity to Don Bosco require us to take to ourselves and to make our own the repeated invitations of Pope Francis, making them concrete: "Wake up the World," "a Church that is constantly going out," "the logic of the fringes," "the culture of encounter instead of a culture of rejection" and "soothe the conflicts."

What does all of this have to do with us Salesian Cooperators? How does it "call upon us" in our life, and specifically, in our service to the Association?

Those who have accepted responsibility within the Association must highlight the following criteria:

1. Foster ongoing formation for both persons and communities;
2. Foster the understanding that we must respond together to the one mission of the Church and of the Salesian Family; and
3. Discern, develop the charism, and support and help the Church and the Association in its mission.

Creativity is the essential quality that one must have to be able to respond to the urgent need of renewal within the Association, drawing from the teachings of Pope Francis those criteria which can assure the accompaniment and the fostering of this creativity: dialogue, discernment, and concern about the fringes.

It is a good idea, before all else, to clarify that the role of government today situates itself more along the lines of animation and of coordination, rather than along the lines of government understood as one that makes decisions. In this situation, which corresponds to a greater organizational and decision-making autonomy of the Coordinators with their Councils, it truly becomes essential that we have the ability and that we take it as our responsibility to be "authoritative" in these matters. We achieve this through the power and incisiveness of the word which we carry and of the testimony which we give as guarantors of this creative fidelity to the charism and as guardians and builders of communion within our Association, and of its full and convinced insertion into the one mission of the Church. In regards to the charism, we must be involved and committed together with all the Salesian Cooperators

of the Centers and of the Provinces to deepen ever more our identity, but – it may seem to be a paradox – while avoiding that it become a sort of "talisman" leading us into a spiral of self-reference or self-sufficiency, when, instead, it is essential that we know and act as we are: members of the Church.

In this regard, it is worth the effort to reread number 130, of *Evangelii Gaudium*:

The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the Center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse.

B. Co-responsibility

The Salesian Cooperator “shares educative and evangelizing co-responsibility in the Association.” (PVA, Statutes, Article 22 §1).

It is in collaboration, in co-responsibility, and even in sharing at all levels that we succeed more easily in being faithful to our origins, to our charism, and at the same time to the Holy Spirit who speaks through concrete reality. If we do not act in this manner, we run the risk, in fact, of thinking and of living our life detached from reality.

Pope Francis writes in number 96 of *Evangelii Gaudium*:

... those who are content to have a modicum of power and would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unit which continues to fight. How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church, which is glorious precisely because it is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be, for all work is ‘the sweat of our brow’. Instead, we waste time talking about ‘what needs to be done’ – in Spanish we call this the sin of ‘habriaqueísmo’ – like spiritual masters and pastoral experts who give instructions from on high. We indulge in endless fantasies and we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people.

If there is cooperation and true reciprocal listening among the leaders at all levels, they can avoid the risk of losing themselves in problems and in daily tasks, thus losing their sense of direction and, therefore, pointing out to us good but impractical ways, or constructing perfect trains which travel empty.

The image of a perfect but empty train causes us to reflect. The Holy Father continues:

An innate tension also exists between globalization and Localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the Local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. In the first, people get caught up in an abstract, globalized universe, falling into step behind everyone else, admiring the glitter of other people's world, gaping and applauding at all the right times. At the other extreme, they turn into a museum of Local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, and incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 234).

This is the foundational criterion which we must share in our realities and about which we must question ourselves: with what means, with which attitudes shall we animate the life of our Centers, our Provinces, and the Association, and "wake them up", or keep them alive and in communion around the fire of the charism, and the appeals of Pope Francis?

C. Collegiality

"The service of animation and of leadership in the Association is an apostolic one, by means of which the Association grows and matures in communion, in the spiritual life, and in the Salesian mission." (PVA, Regulations, Article 17 §1).

Collegiality and subsidiarity are fundamental for "*a salutary decentralization*". (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 16) Francis adds that this is an indispensable condition for renewal: "The Church has to accept this unruly freedom of the Word, which accomplishes what it wills in ways that surpass our calculations and ways of thinking." (22) . In other words, we must not be afraid to break with the historical habits of the Church which are "not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel" (43).

If collegiality is the style of governance of Pope Francis, it ought to become the style adopted by the Association of Salesian Cooperators also.

The mission requires the ability to insert oneself into diversified social, ecclesial, and cultural contexts, knowing how to perceive the urgencies and needs and demonstrating the capacity for collaboration with all those who are disposed to work for the common good.

Collegiality requires that the members of the Council blend together, integrating themselves, and be willing to collaborate most actively. They must also be available to make a journey of deepening and

of maturation in those qualities which the role requires. They ought to know how to work on a team. Let us cite some applications and consequences, calling to mind the correct reading of the word "collegiality." Two complementary thoughts capture its meaning:

1. The whole Council is responsible for the entire life of the Association (PVA, Regulations, Article 21).
2. The distribution of specific tasks among the members of a Council means entrusting to a specific Cooperator the coordination of activities and of commitments in one specific area, who then must necessarily present them to the entire Council for its decision. (PVA, Regulations, Article 22)

Leaders ought to be capable of coordinating among themselves, both at their own level and among the other levels (i.e., between the Local reality and that of the Province; and between the Province and the Regional and World realities).

A task entrusted to one's sector or level demands a reciprocal exchange of information both horizontally at the same level and vertically between that level and all the others.

Multiple tasks and commitments cannot fall to one person alone. A distribution of tasks, according to the possibilities and abilities of each one, will consolidate and strengthen forces and will help the Association realize its objectives and goals.

Collegial responsibility requires making oneself present and active in all areas of the life of the Cooperators. When, for just motives or temporary reasons, a leader cannot see to completion the task entrusted to him or her, the entire Council is called upon to fill in and to make up for the void, for the good of persons and of the Association.

The creativity and initiative of each Councilor must, however, avoid the multiplication of tasks for this disperses their energies. There needs to be planning and coordination which are effective and timely.

Knowing how to collaborate in collegial style doesn't happen all by itself; it demands a formation which keeps in mind certain essential elements.

In this regard, let us make our own the methodology of collaboration of the entire Salesian Family (from *The Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, paragraph 41):

1. Above all it is necessary to educate oneself about planning together. Every educative and apostolic activity should start from an analysis of the situation of one's own beneficiaries and aim at achieving certain specific objectives, short, medium and long term. All this needs to be studied and planned together, making good use of the skills available, respecting different points of view and encouraging convergence.

2. It is necessary to work together on the strategies of coordination. The combination of different forces in view of an enterprise never occurs automatically. In fact, certain abilities are required: to have precise knowledge of the problem one intends to solve, to clarify the purpose of the exercise, realistically weigh up the possibilities for action, assess the forces and the resources available, honestly state the support that one can give and one intends to give.

3. It is also necessary to accept the consequences of the logic of reciprocal action. Giving and receiving are never in just one direction. Mutual appreciation is an awareness of one's own gifts and those of the others, it is the recognition of one's own worth and that of others, it is the acceptance and the exchange of complementary sensitivities, ideas and skills, it is making contributions with generosity and humility.

4. Finally it is necessary to educate oneself to shared responsibility. The success of collaboration in the educative and apostolic fields depends on both the acceptance of a primary responsibility which coordinates the project, and the recognition of the responsibilities of others, giving everyone space so that they can actively take part in carrying out the common plan.

Governance, co-responsibility, and collegiality are at the service of persons and necessarily demand organization: without this nothing can be efficacious in a concrete way. The structures of any Association, like those of the Cooperators, are not ends in themselves, but are instituted precisely so as to make the achievement of the purposes of said Association easy to achieve. Such an association is not a spontaneous group but is an ensemble of persons who are animated by the same spirit and involved and committed in carrying forward a common objective using the same means. This unity does not eliminate personal or group initiative but, rather, makes it easier and gives it strength by inserting it harmoniously within the action of an Association.

This communion and collaboration are manifested by an essential availability to live specific moments with one's brothers and sisters which cannot be substituted and which are foreseen by the *Project of Apostolic Life* – with availability for apostolic tasks, as permitted by one's personal work and family responsibilities.

The structures of the Association are comprised of Cooperators who accept tasks of responsibility and who render their service of encouragement, coordination, and support to their brothers and sisters so they may “live out their apostolic action, mission, and communion according to this *Project of Apostolic Life*.” (see PVA, Statutes, Article 33)