

Lesson 12 – Cooperator Mission (Session 1)

Objectives

1. To understand how the same field of action is open to the Cooperators as to other members of the Salesian Family.
2. To understand the meaning of the word *mission*.
3. To understand that the mission of the Cooperator is assigned by God himself.
4. To understand that the lay faithful are called to a kingly mission in furthering the Kingdom of God.

Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, pp. 45, 47-48, 49

“The field of action is the same for the Cooperators as for the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, with which they intend to associate” (Don Bosco, Reg. CC, 1876, ch. 4).

“All the members of the Salesian Family receive from the Holy Spirit a special grace of enlightenment and decision in view of the concrete needs of the poor and abandoned youth” (SDB GC20, doc. 1, #163).

“Like Don Bosco we must offer tremendous love, esteem and trust to the young, no matter how they come to us. In human society they rank highest in numbers, dynamism and need. They must have our good will and our dedicated interest and help” (St. Paul VI, Angelus message, Jan. 31, 1971).

The first article of the Salesian Congregation’s Constitutions presented for approval (which was granted in 1874) runs thus: “The object of the Salesian Society is that its members, while striving to attain Christian perfection, shall be engaged in the various works of charity, both spiritual and temporal, on behalf of the young, especially of the poorer classes; and shall also undertake the education of young candidates for the priesthood” (MB X, 956).

Within the Church, and in the service of the complete Church mission, the Salesians (both religious and Cooperators) have a *specific mission*. The word *mission* is rich in meaning (cf. GC20, #23-26); above all, it implies that apostolic work is not assigned by man and hence is not within this autonomy and having his individual tastes; it is God-given: man is *sent* to work in God’s vineyard (cf. Matt 20:4). Hence it comprises the following elements:

1. Someone who *sends*: God, the Spirit of God, the source of every charism.
2. Someone who is *sent*: “the missionary,” always a servant, an instrument.
3. People to whom the servant is sent: the *recipients* of the mission.
4. A *service*, fulfilled in the name of God, by the missionary, for the recipients.

Viewed with the eyes of faith, the Cooperator is called and sent by the Lord to continue Don Bosco’s work, as far as circumstances render this possible, in communion with all his or her Salesian brothers [and sisters] and in coordination with other missionary efforts in the Church.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 22

Co-responsible in the Mission

1. 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. He or she shares educative and evangelizing co-responsibility in the Association. Each Cooperator must participate in the meetings for programming and evaluating the various activities and in choosing those who will undertake specific responsibilities.

2. With responsibility and a sense of belonging, every Salesian Cooperator supports the economic autonomy of the Association so that it can carry out its mission.

Reference: St. John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, no. 14

Through their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, “who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father the testimony of his life and by the power of his word,” the lay faithful are given the ability and responsibility to accept the gospel in faith and to proclaim in it word and deed, without hesitating to courageously identify and denounce evil. United to Christ, the “great prophet” (Luke 7:16), and in the spirit made “witnesses” of the Risen Christ, the lay faithful are made sharers in the appreciation of the Church’s supernatural faith, that “cannot err in matters of belief” and sharers as well in the grace of the word (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Rev 19:10). They are also called to allow the newness and the power of the gospel to shine out every day in their family and social life, as well as to express patiently and courageously in the contradictions of the present age their hope of future glory even “through the framework of their secular life.”

Because the faithful belong to Christ, Lord and King of the Universe, they share in his *kingly mission* and are called by him to spread that Kingdom in history. They exercise their kingship as Christians above all in the spiritual combat in which they seek to overcome in themselves the kingdom of sin (cf. Rom 6:12), and then to make a gift of themselves so as to serve, in justice and in charity, Jesus who is himself present in all his brothers and sisters, above all in the very least (cf. Matt 25:40).

Reference: Mark 6: 7-13 (JB)

The Mission of the Twelve

He made a tour round the villages, teaching. Then he summoned the Twelve and began to send them out in pairs, giving them authority over the unclean spirits. And he instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no haversack, no coppers for their purses. They were to wear sandals but, he added “Do not take a spare tunic.” And he said to them “If you enter a house anywhere, stay there until you leave the district. And if any place does not welcome you and people refuse to listen to you, as you walk away shake off the dust from under your feet as a sign to them. So they set off to preach repentance; and they cast out many devils, and anointed many sick people with oil and cured them.

Suggested Reading

In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 135-136.

Chapter 3 – Early Fruits of the Salesians: Dominic Savio

An Exceptional Meeting

Early on the morning of the first Monday of October 1854, a young boy was walking with his father toward Don Bosco, who was in the town of Murialdo on an excursion with some of his students from Turin. The boy's bright smile and respectful tone immediately impressed the priest.

"Who are you?" asked Don Bosco. "Where are you from?"

"I'm Dominic Savio. I come from Mondonio. This is my father. My teacher, Father Cugliero, told you about me."

Taking Dominic aside, Don Bosco asked about his school work and his life at home. As Don Bosco was about to call the boy's father, Dominic asked, "What do you say, Father? Will you take me to Turin with you to study?"

"Well, you look like good material to me!"

"Good material, Father? Good for what?"

"To make a beautiful garment for the Lord, son."

"Then take me with you, Father. You be the tailor, and I'll be the cloth. Make of me a beautiful garment for our Lord."

"I'm a bit afraid that your health may not hold up under the strain of study."

"Don't worry about that, Father. God has given me health and strength so far, and he won't fail me in the future."

"What do you want to do when you finish your studies?"

"If God gives me grace, I very much want to be a priest."

"Fine! Now let's see how quick you are at learning. Take this book [an issue of the *Catholic Readings*] and see whether you can learn this page by heart. Come back tomorrow and recite it to me."

Don Bosco sent Dominic off to join the other boys who were playing, and then he turned to have a word with his father. To Don Bosco's surprise, Dominic returned in eight minutes. Smiling, he said, "I can recite it now if you want me to, Father!"

To the amazement of Don Bosco, Dominic had learned the passage by heart and also understood its meaning quite well.

"Very good," said Don Bosco. "Since you have anticipated my wishes, I will anticipate the answer. You may come to Turin with me. From now on you are one of my boys. Pray for both of us that we may do God's will."

Overjoyed and grateful beyond words, Dominic took Don Bosco's hand and said, "I hope to behave so well that you will never regret my conduct!"

Off, then, to Don Bosco's school in Turin went Dominic Savio early in October 1854. He was twelve and a half years old.

Who was Dominic Savio

On a beautiful spring day, April 2, 1842, in the hamlet of Riva, two miles from the city of Chieri in Piedmont, northern Italy, Dominic Savio was born. He was the second of eleven children born to Charles and Brigid Savio, who were poor, hardworking, pious people. The father was a blacksmith.

Dominic was a remarkable boy, a real boy among boys, and in a true sense an apostle among his companions and friends. He felt the surge of anger and the attraction of the good things in life, but he knew how to control the rebellion of nature against its Maker.

Young Dominic was unusually bright and good for his age. Therefore, the pastor of the town of Murialdo, Father John Zucca, decided to admit him to first Holy Communion when he was only seven years old. This was very remarkable in an age when it was the norm to put off first Communion until the child was eleven or twelve.

Death but Not Sin

It was a fervent Communion the boy made. At that time he formed the program of his whole life. It comprised four resolutions:

I will go to confession and Communion as often as my confessor will allow.

I will sanctify Sundays and holy days in a special way.

Jesus and Mary will be my friends.

Death but not sin.

This last resolution was ever before him, and he kept it faithfully.