

## ***Lesson 14 – Cooperator Mission (Session 3)***

### **Objectives**

1. To know the other priorities of the Salesian mission.
2. To understand the service which the Salesian mission wishes to transmit.
3. To know what kind of apostolic work is to be done in this mission.
4. To understand that the focus needs to be on the development of the whole human being in this mission.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, pp. 53-54*

Other priorities of the Salesian mission include: Mission among the adults of the working classes. – The Holy Spirit also inspired Don Bosco to be directly interested in grown-ups. This mission seemed to be an obvious integration and development of his youth apostolate; and in this field too his preference was decidedly toward people *of poor and humble circumstances*. . . .

Mission is among the non-evangelized. – Don Bosco cultivated the missionary ideal and participated in a practical way in the missionary work of the Church of his day. . . . In the mission fields, too, the social work, the preaching of the Gospel and the setting up of the Church have their hierarchy of preferences and urgency: poor youth and the working classes come first. . . . Today missionary activity assumes a growing importance because of the close link with the very pressing problems of our times: peace, development, agreements, positive exchanges between different nations, races and religions. . . .

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 11*

### **Typical Activities**

Salesian Cooperators are open to varied forms of apostolate. Among these they give a privileged place to family life, besides their own work and their life in the Association:

- Christian catechesis and formation;
- Animation of youth and family groups and movements;
- Collaboration in educational and scholastic institutions;
- Social service among the poor;
- Work in social communications;
- Cooperation in pastoral ministry for vocations;
- Missionary work;
- Collaboration in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue;
- Witness to their own faith in socio-political service;
- The development of the Association.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, p. 54*

The service the Salesian mission wishes to render [is] development of the whole man. . . . It centers on *human and Christian education* of the young and *pastoral care* of the working classes, carried out with the mental attitude and the working methods characteristic of the education and apostolic activity of Don Bosco. The purpose of all this is to build a world that is really “human” and influence the local and universal Church, making youth and the working classes truly a part of each: this to be achieved by the work done to improve their condition as human beings and Christians.

*Reference: St. John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, n. 5*

### **The Human Person: A Dignity Violated and Exalted**

We furthermore call to mind the *violations* to which the human person is subjected. When the individual is not recognized and loved in the person's dignity as the living image of God (cf. Gen 1:26), the human being is exposed to more humiliating and degrading forms of "manipulation," that most assuredly reduce the individual to a slavery to those who are stronger. "Those who are stronger" can take a variety of names: an ideology; economic power, political and inhumane systems, scientific technocracy or the intrusiveness of the mass media. Once again we find ourselves before many persons, our sisters and brothers, whose fundamental rights are being violated, owing to their exceedingly great capacity for endurance and to the clear injustice of certain civil laws: the right to life and to integrity, the right to a house and to work, the right to a family and responsible parenthood, the right to participation in public and political life, the right to freedom of conscience and the practice of religion.

*Reference: Jerusalem Bible, Luke 10: 29-37*

### **Parable of the Good Samaritan**

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of brigands; they took all he had, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted them on to his own mount, carried him to the inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and on my way back I will make good of any extra expense you may have." Which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the brigands hands?" "The one who took pity on him," he replied. Jesus said to him, "Go, and do the same yourself."

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 2, Article 7*

### **Co-Responsibility in Acting**

So that co-responsibility in the mission translates into co-responsibility in acting:

§1. those who are entrusted with leadership roles within the Association, at whatever level, carry out said roles in a spirit of service, according to the principles of communion, co-responsibility, synergy, and cooperation;

§2. given their diverse situations and commitments, Salesian Cooperators offer their witness by participating in various ways in the life of Association:

-- the young, bearers of dynamism, contribute to the common mission with their sensitivity and their creative capacity,

-- the adults and the elderly, with their mature experience and long fidelity, bring with them the witness of a life rooted in Christ and lived in temporal realities; in the family, through their commitment in the areas of their own work and of culture, and in their exercise of social, economic, and political responsibilities,

-- those for whom it is impossible to carry out an active apostolate give strength to the educative action and to the apostolate of all the others through the offering of their suffering and their prayer;

-- the members of the diocesan clergy who are Salesian Cooperators offer the service of their own ministry.



### **Dominic's Great Desire**

The next forward step in Dominic Savio's ascent to holiness was taken on the second Sunday of Lent, 1855. Don Bosco gave the boys a talk in chapel on how necessary and easy it is to become a saint. Dominic was profoundly impressed and began to think most seriously about it. He even seemed to be worrying himself sick. In a few days Don Bosco asked him whether something was bothering him, whether he was suffering some illness.

"On the contrary, Don Bosco! I am suffering something good. I have an intense longing to become a saint. Your sermon last Sunday...."

The master seized the occasion. "Dominic, begin by saying all your prayers devoutly. Perform all your duties exactly, and always be cheerful. The Lord loves a cheerful giver." Dominic obeyed.

But, in his eagerness to advance in holiness, Dominic began to put pieces of wood or small stones into his bed and would use insufficient blankets. When Don Bosco found that out, he quickly stopped him and advised his pupil again that he could become a saint by always being cheerful and by fulfilling perfectly all his duties.

The wise touch of Don Bosco was molding his pupil with the same delicacy with which the hand of the sculptor forms his masterpiece. Before sending Dominic into the apostolate of action, Don Bosco points out to him the apostolate of good example, the exact fulfillment of duties, and a happy, serene disposition. Don Bosco knew that a boy of edifying conduct is already an apostle, but he also knew that among youth, an apostolate without serenity and cheerfulness cannot be effective.

Sometime later Dominic again went to Don Bosco and unburdened his continued intense longing to become a saint. At this point the master revealed to him, without beating about the bush, the great secret, that of his own sanctity: "Dominic, you must dedicate yourself to gaining souls for God."

That did it.

### **Dominic's Work at Apostleship**

During the next two years Dominic climbed from virtue to virtue. He became a heroic apostle of charity, meekness, and purity among his companions. St. John Bosco, his confessor, spiritual director, and master, recorded numerous examples and anecdotes which reveal young Dominic's virtues.

Does an argument arise among his companions? Dominic calms the boys and settles the dispute. Does a smutty paper or magazine get into the school? Dominic destroys it in front of his offending companions.

"What's the idea, Savio? That's mine," says one of the boys.

"You should be ashamed, Carlo!"

"Well, what have you got eyes for anyway?"

"To see the beautiful face of God and of his Blessed Mother, should I get to heaven."

Does some boy remain away from confession and Communion too long? Dominic sidles over to him during a game and extracts a promise to go with him to confession come Saturday. Saturday comes, but the fellow doesn't show up. When they meet again Dominic says, "Ah, you disappointed me. You didn't keep your promise." An excuse follows.

"That's one of the devil's tricks," answers Savio. The boy goes to confession and later tells Savio how glad he is for following his advice, and that he will go frequently in the future.

One day Dominic offered a friendly correction to a companion. The boy forgot that this was an act of kindness and answered with insults and struck and kicked Dominic. Being older and bigger than his offender, Dominic could easily

have retaliated with interest. "But," wrote Don Bosco, "he sought no revenge save that of Christian charity. At first Dominic became red in the face, and then stifling all feeling of resentment, he replied, 'I forgive you, if you have done wrong. But don't try that sort of behavior on others.'"

"Examples such as these of Dominic's mortification, charity, self-forgetfulness, humility, can easily be multiplied, for they were part of Dominic's very life," wrote Don Bosco of his heroic pupil-apostle. So active and effective was Dominic's apostolate among his companions that Don Bosco remarked, "Dominic catches more fish with his little stratagems than many preachers do with their sermons."

### **The Peacemaker**

Dominic often broke up fights and hatreds that were becoming dangerous. On one occasion two boys became so enraged that the only way they could think of settling the affair was to fight to the end with stones. The reason was that one boy had insulted the family of the other. The two were to meet in the lot about a ten-minute walk from the Oratory.

Dominic learned about the coming fight and spoke to the boys, both of whom were older and bigger than he. In spite of all his entreaties and advice, they would not change their minds.

After school Dominic met them again and said, "Since you persist in this insane and sinful quarrel, I ask you to accept one condition."

"All right, as long as you don't try to stop the fight."

"He is a good-for-nothing bum!" shouted one boy, and the other spit back. "I won't be quiet till I split his skull!"

Dominic shuddered at the threats, but to check a greater evil, he continued, "What I ask won't stop the fight."

"Well, what is it?"

"I'll tell you when we get there."

"You're trying to trick us!"

"No, I'm not! I'll be with you all the time."

"Then you're going to call somebody?"

"I should, but I won't. Let's go! I'm coming along. But you must give me your word!"

They did so, and off they went to the open lot. Dominic had all he could do to keep them from fighting on the way. When they arrived, Dominic did something the other two had not bargained for. He waited till they paced off their positions, each picking five stones. Then he spoke.

"Before you start," he said, "you must keep your promise!" Taking out a small crucifix which he used to wear around his neck, Dominic held it up.

"You have to look at this crucifix," he said, "and you have to throw the first stone at me and say, 'Jesus was innocent and died forgiving his murderers, but I am a sinner and I'm going to offend him by bloody revenge!'"

He strode up to the angrier boy, knelt before him and said, "You start! Throw the first stone at me! Aim for my head!"

Taken by surprise, the boy began to tremble. "No!" he protested. "Never! I have no grudge against you. I'll even defend you if anyone hits you!"

Dominic ran up to the other boy. He too was astonished and assured Dominic he was his friend and meant him no harm. Then Dominic stood up. Looking at them sternly, he said with great emotion: "You are both ready to face danger to save me, and I mean nothing to you! Yet, to save your own souls, for which Christ died, you can't even overlook a stupid remark made at school! You will lose your souls by this sin!"

"At that moment," one of them later admitted, "all my determination broke down and a cold chill ran through me. I hated myself for having forced a good friend like Dominic to go to such lengths to keep us from sin. To show my regret, I forgave the boy who had insulted me and asked Dominic to tell me of some good priest who would hear my confession."