

## ***Lesson 16 – Cooperator in the World***

### **Objectives:**

1. To realize the call of the laity to evangelize the world.
2. To look at ways this can be done in everyday life.
3. To understand the needs of the world's youth today.
4. To understand that as a Christian you are in the world but not of it.

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

15. The “world” thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation, because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ. The Council is able then to indicate the proper and special sense of the divine vocation which is directed to the lay faithful. They are not called to abandon the position that they have in the world. Baptism does not take them from the world at all, as the apostle Paul points out: “So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God” (1 Cor 7:24). On the contrary, he entrusts a vocation to them that properly concerns their situation in the world. The lay faithful, in fact, “are called by God so that they, led by the spirit of the Gospel, might contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially in this way of life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they manifest Christ to others.” Thus for the lay faithful, to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well. In fact, in their situation in the world God manifests his plan and communicates to them their particular vocation of “seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.”

40. The *lay faithful's duty to society primarily begins* in marriage and in the family. This duty can only be fulfilled adequately with the conviction of the unique and irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the Church herself.

56. Along the same line the Second Vatican Council states: “This lay spirituality should take its particular character from the circumstances of one's state in life (married and family life, celibacy, widowhood), from one's state of health and from one's professional and social activity. All should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life and should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.”

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, pp. 114-115*

Since the Cooperators do not live “in community,” belonging more directly within the structures of the local Church, and are more deeply involved in the ways of thinking and acting of the “outside world,” they are generally better equipped than the Salesian religious to sense and understand the problems of the young and know what possibilities there are of organizing certain kinds of Salesian activity; they are better able to render “appropriate and flexible service that is more rapid and more effective,” that direct and “efficacious Christian presence” among the young (GC20, n. 731); more capable, finally of working within the social structures which condition the lives of the young.

Clearly the Cooperators can be *directly responsible for certain works*. To quote some remarkable cases: In 1960 in Guayaquil, Ecuador, the Cooperators set up a whole complex of social work: teaching, vocational guidance, kindergartens, assistance to the sick, etc. The whole organization is their own responsibility. Another example is Hong Kong. There they look after the direction and teaching of a night school with an attendance of 1,600 pupils.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 1, Article 6*

## **Salesian Cooperators: Salesians in the World**

Salesian Cooperators live out their faith in their own secular reality. Taking inspiration from Don Bosco's apostolic project, they have a strong sense of communion with the other members of the Salesian Family. They commit themselves to the same mission to youth and to ordinary folk in a fraternal and united way. They work for the good of the Church and of society in a manner adapted to the educational needs of their territory and to their own concrete possibilities.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 16*

## **Salesian Presence in the World**

1. Salesian Cooperators feel they are "in intimate solidarity" with the society in which they live and for which they are called to be light, salt, and leaven. They believe in the interior resources of the person. They share the values of their own culture and they commit themselves to work so that it may be guided by Christian humanism. They promote new realities with a critical Christian sense. They integrate into their life "all that which is good," adopting a listening stance, especially as regards the young, in discerning the signs of the times.
2. Faced with socio-cultural challenges and difficulties, they adopt a critical and constructive attitude. They work with commitment to spread a Christian culture and ethic of welcome and solidarity in society.

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

## **Typical Activities**

Salesian Cooperators are open to varied forms of apostolate. Among these they give 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: Matthew 5: 13-16 (RSV)*

## **Salt of the Earth and Light of the World**

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt loses its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

*Reference: Matthew 28: 16-20 (RSV)*

### **Appearance in Galilee -- The Mission to the World**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

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

33. The entire mission of the Church, then, is concentrated and manifested in *evangelization*. Through the winding passages of history, the Church has made her way under the grace and the command of Jesus Christ: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15); "... and lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age" (Mt 28:20). "To evangelize," writes Paul VI, "is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her most profound identity."

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 1, Article 2*

### **The Salesian Cooperators in their Social-Cultural Reality**

1. Salesian Cooperators make the educational solicitude of the Salesian charism their own in all areas of life. They are faithful to the Gospel and to the social justice doctrines of the Church. They are attentive to the signs of the times; they continue God's creative work and give witness to Christ with integrity, hard work, and coherence of life; through the educative mission and serious, up-dated professionalism; through sharing joy and sufferings in faith; and by being available to give service in every circumstance.
2. Their aim is to form a mature critical conscience so as to participate responsibly in social life in the areas of culture, economy, and politics. They refuse all that which provokes and feeds injustice, oppression, marginalization, and violence, and they work courageously to remove their causes.
3. They give attention to and value the ethical dimension of culture. They keep themselves constantly updated on the evolution of the means of social communication, above all because of the impact which these have on the formation of the young, of families, and of ordinary folk.
4. They integrate themselves, according to their own capacities and possibilities, in cultural and sociopolitical structures and workers' unions so as to develop and achieve the common good. They work, in conformity with the Gospel demands of liberty and of justice, for respect for human rights and, consequently, for the renewal and the healing of mentalities and customs, and of the laws and the societal structures of the areas in which they live.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 1, Article 3*

### **The Association in Civic and Ecclesial Realities**

1. The Association is attentive, with the thrust of the Preventive System, to the cries coming from society for the integral promotion of the human person and of fundamental human rights.
2. The Association intervenes courageously, according to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church, to promote a sociopolitical culture inspired by the Gospel and to defend human and Christian values. It illumines and urges its members to assume their own commitments in society with responsibility.

Salesian Cooperators make themselves present and bring with them the unique characteristics of the Salesian charism to associations, apostolic movements and groups, educational agencies, and organizations which have service to youth and to the family as their objective, and which promote justice, peace, and solidarity with peoples on the path of development.

3. The Association follows social volunteering with particular attention. It adheres to formative proposals and participates in the initiatives of organizations of Christian inspiration.
4. The Association commits itself to foster intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 1, Article 4*

### **The Structures in Which They Work**

Salesian Cooperators promote the launching and functioning of works, becoming active in the areas in which they live; in a particular way:

- in civic, cultural, intercultural, socio-economic, and political arenas: paying attention to the education of the young, human rights, and the life of the family,
- in ecclesial environments: offering their personal collaboration, in synergy and with responsibility, to their bishops and parish priests, especially in the parish communities and in the animating bodies of the diocese,
- in places animated by the Salesian Society, by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, or by other groups of the Salesian Family,
- in works run by other religious communities and ecclesial movements.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 141-143..*

## **Lesson 16: Cooperator in the World – Questions for Reflection**

1. How do I evangelize my family, co-workers, friends, neighbors, et al.?
2. How can I better evangelize those who are young and marginalized in society?
3. What are some of the needs of the youth in my local area?
4. In what ways can I illumine the light of Christ within myself, so as to be more effective in bringing him to others?

### **Prayer Experience**

Compose a litany highlighting the needs of the world, responding with “Lord, have mercy,” “Christ, have mercy.”

## **Favors from Heaven**

Don Bosco himself was an eyewitness to extraordinary events concerning Dominic Savio. He wrote: "I am recording things I have seen with my own eyes. I assure you, I am adhering strictly to truth. The reader is free to form his own considered opinion."

Several times, particularly on days when Dominic received Communion or when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, he appeared to be rapt in ecstasy, so much so that he would remain in church indefinitely, unless someone called him for his regular duties.

One day Dominic was missing from breakfast, from class, and from lunch. No one knew where he was. On being informed, Don Bosco guessed that he was in church as he had been at other times. His guess was right. He went into the sanctuary behind the main altar. There was Dominic, standing as immovable as a rock. One foot was over the other; one hand rested on a bookstand, the other was pressed against his heart. His face was fixed toward the tabernacle. He did not flutter an eyelash. Don Bosco called him. No answer. He shook him. Dominic looked at Don Bosco and asked, "Is Mass over already?"

Dominic apologized for breaking a school rule. Don Bosco then sent him for something to eat, adding, "If anyone asks where you were, say you were carrying out an order of mine." Thus he would not be embarrassed by questions from classmates.

Another day, Don Bosco had just finished his thanksgiving after Mass and was about to leave the sacristy when he heard someone talking in the sanctuary. Upon investigating, he found Dominic alternately speaking and then listening, as in conversation. Among other things, Don Bosco heard Dominic say, "Yes, my God, I have said it before, and I will keep on saying it: I love you, and I want to love you till death. If you see that I am about to commit a sin, make me die first! Yes, death first, but not sin!"

At times Don Bosco asked Dominic what happened to him on such occasions. "I don't know," was his answer. "I get distracted and lose track of my prayer, and then I see such wonderful things that the hours fly by like seconds!"

One day Dominic dashed into Don Bosco's room saying, "Hurry, Father, come with me! You have important work to do!"

"Where?" asked Don Bosco.

"Don't waste time!" he urged.

At Dominic's insistence, Don Bosco agreed to go with him. They left the house, hurried down one street, into another, and up a third, without saying a word, and then into another street. They hurried along a line of tenements, and finally Dominic stopped before one. He ran up the stairs to the third floor with Don Bosco following. Dominic stopped at one door, rang the bell, and told Don Bosco, "Here!" He then dashed back down into the street.

The door of the apartment opened, and a woman stood before Don Bosco. "Hurry!" cried the woman. "There's little time. My husband is dying. He left the Church, but now he wants to die a good Catholic!" The man made his peace with God and died.

Days later, Don Bosco asked Dominic how he knew about that dying man. His face clouded over with a look of distress, and tears came to his eyes. Don Bosco did not insist.

"Innocence of life," wrote Don Bosco, "love of God, and the desire of Heaven had so elevated his soul that he could be said to be living always absorbed in God."

Sometimes he would stop playing, gaze off into the distance, and begin walking alone. On being asked why he had left the game, he would say, "Those distractions come over me, and Heaven seems to open up above me, and I have to walk away so as not to say things the boys will laugh at."

Dominic often spoke of the Pope and expressed the wish to see him before dying, hinting that he had something important to tell him. Since he kept repeating this, Don Bosco asked him what was this important thing he had to tell the Holy Father.

“If I could talk to the Pope,” he replied, “I would tell him that in the midst of all his troubles he must not cease to take special care of England. God is preparing a great triumph for the Catholic Church there!”

“How do you know?” Don Bosco asked.

“I’ll tell you,” he answered, “but don’t repeat it to others because they may tease me. If you go to Rome, tell it to Pius IX.

“One morning, as I was making my thanksgiving after Communion, a strong distraction came over me. I seemed to be on a very vast plain, full of people blanketed in a heavy fog. They were moving about, floundering in the dark. ‘This is England,’ someone nearby told me. I was just about to ask questions when I saw Pope Pius IX, majestically dressed, as I have seen him in pictures. Bearing a bright torch in his hands, he strode through that immense throng of people. As he walked, the fog cleared in the light of his torch, and people could be seen in clear daylight. ‘This torch,’ I was told, is the Catholic faith, which must bring light to the English people.”

When Don Bosco went to Rome in 1858, he gave Dominic’s message to Pope Pius IX. He listened with kindly interest. “This encourages me,” said the Pope, “to continue working energetically for England, in which I have already shown greatest interest. If nothing more, it is the advice of a good soul.”

### **Favors from Our Lady**

Dominic’s sister, Theresa, testified that on the morning of September 12, 1856, Dominic rushed to Don Bosco’s room.

“My mother is very sick, and our Lady wants to cure her.”

“How do you know?”

“I just know, that’s all.”

“Has someone written to you?”

“No, but I know just the same.”

Don Bosco gave him permission because, as he later told Mr. Savio, “When your son insists on anything, I do well to agree with him.”

Don Bosco gave Dominic fare for the coach to Chieri and then a carriage to Mondonio. On his way, the boy met his father, who was hastening for a doctor.

“What are you doing here?” he asked his son.

“I’m going to see mother. She’s very sick.”

“Go to grandma’s!” insisted Mr. Savio and rushed on. Dominic ran home.

Mrs. Savio was in labor. The neighboring women were doing what they could for her but were fast losing hope. Dominic suddenly rushed into the house. Disregarding the objections of the women, he ran upstairs to his mother, saying, “I know she’s sick. That’s why I came!” His mother was alone.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

“I found out that you were sick, and I came to see you.”

Forcing herself to sit up, she replied, “Oh, it’s nothing. Go downstairs, or go next door. I’ll call you later.”

“I’ll go, Mom, but first I want to hug you!”

He quickly embraced his mother and kissed her. Then he left the house and returned immediately to Turin. A few minutes later Mrs. Savio’s labor pains reached their climax and subsided. It was at five that evening that Dominic’s sister, Catherine, was born. By the time Mr. Savio returned with a doctor, the birth was over.

The women who were assisting Mrs. Savio noticed she was wearing a green scapular. Not having seen it before while they were nursing her, they inquired where she had obtained it. She, too, was surprised but then replied, “Now I know why Dominic wanted to hug me before leaving, and why I have been safely delivered and cured. He must have put this scapular on me as he embraced me, because I’ve never had one like this before.”

On his return to the Oratory, the only answer Dominic gave Don Bosco was, “My mother is cured. Our Lady, whom I put about her neck, has cured her.”

That same scapular later saved the life of Theresa herself in similar condition, as well as the lives of several women. While Dominic was at home, during his last illness, he one day told his mother as he embraced her, “Do you remember the time I came to see you when you were very sick and I left a scapular about your neck? That’s what cured you. Take good care of it and lend it to other women in the same condition. As it saved you, it will save them. Only, please don’t ever ask for anything in return.”

The scapular, however, was lost. “I had very many requests for this miraculous scapular,” testified Theresa. “It was lent to many women in labor who were in danger of death. To my regret, it was never returned to me.”