

Lesson 19 – Organization of the Association (Session 1)

Objectives

1. To understand the basic organizational structure (i.e., the local, provincial, and world levels) of the Salesian Cooperators Association.
2. To understand how each council within the Association is appointed.
3. To understand how the Association is open to all according to their abilities.
4. To understand how the organization of the Salesian Cooperators helps strengthen the bonds of unity.

Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, p. 155, 153

Don Bosco was a zealous organizer but always a realist; hence his preoccupation with unity and cohesion in the forces he had gathered together; he aimed at top efficiency. Right from the beginning he wanted the Association well organized.

“The group apostolate of Christian believers happily corresponds to a human and Christian need and at the same time signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ. . . . The associations established to carry on the apostolate in common sustain their members, form them for the apostolate, and rightly organize and regulate their apostolic work so that much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own. . . . In the present circumstances, it is quite necessary that, in the area of lay activity, the united and organized form of the apostolate be strengthened. In fact, only the close pooling of resources is capable of fully achieving all the aims of the modern apostolate in firmly protecting its interests.” (Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 18)

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 33

The Reasons for This Organization

Salesian Cooperators, called to live their apostolic vocation in society and in the Church, have an appropriate organizational structure. The Association of which they are part is the means to live out mission and communion according to this *Project of Apostolic Life*.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 34

Flexible Organizations

Faithful to the will of the Founder, the Association has a flexible and functional structure, established on three levels of government: local, provincial, and world.

The efficacy of the Association’s action in its area, and its openness to the universality of communion and of mission, are assured through this structure of organization.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 35

Governance and Animation at Local, Provincial and World Levels

With the authority of the Rector Major safeguarded, and represented normally by his vicar, or by a delegate named by him, the governance and animation of the Association is entrusted to its own local, provincial, and world councils, which also include the presence of religious members nominated by their respective SDB or FMA provincial for the

local and provincial councils, and by the Rector Major for the World Council. Legal representation of the Association is entrusted to the coordinator of the respective council.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 36

The Local Level

1. The fundamental nucleus of the Association is the local center. Ordinarily, it gathers together Salesian Cooperators who work within a specific territory. Every center has a delegate appointed by his or her respective provincial. The center is preferably established near a Salesian work – either of the Salesians of Don Bosco or of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
2. The local centers are directed collegially by a local council which is elected by all the members comprising the assembly of the local center. The council elects from among its members a local coordinator and defines the specific roles of the councilors. The delegate is part of the council and has an active voice.
3. Men and women of good will, even if of a different Christian confession, or of a different religion, and/or culture, who feel an affinity with the Salesian charisma, can share in the initiatives of the local center and offer their collaboration as “Friends of Don Bosco.”

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 37

The Provincial Level

1. Local centers are organized into provinces established by the Rector Major, subject to a proposal by the World Council.
2. In consideration of the “bond of union” and of the charismatic ties among the Association of Salesian Cooperators and the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Association’s provinces are related to the reality of the respective SDB or FMA provinces.
3. Every province has a provincial council elected by the local councils *in sede* at the provincial congress according to the modalities foreseen in the Regulations of the congress.
4. The provincial council is organized collegially, electing a provincial coordinator from among its members. The council itself defines the specific tasks of each of the councilors. Every provincial council has an SDB and an FMA delegate among its councilors. These have an active voice and are named by the respective SDB and FMA provincials.
5. For the animation of the Association, the provinces, with respect for the autonomy of their governance, are organized into regions according to affinity of language, culture, and territory, by the decision of the Rector Major, with the agreement of the World Council. The SDB and FMA provincials concerned, in common accord, name one SDB regional delegate and one FMA regional delegate.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 38

The World Level

1. The World Council is composed of:
 - the world coordinator, named directly by the Rector Major,
 - the SDB world delegate, named by the Rector Major, and the FMA world delegate, named by the Rector Major on the proposal of the Mother General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,
 - the world councilors, elected by the respective regional congresses,

- the world treasurer and world secretary, elected – by secret ballot – by the councilors themselves.
- 2. The World Executive Secretariat (SEM) is composed of the world coordinator, the world treasurer, the world secretary, the SDB world delegate, and the FMA world delegate.

The SEM has the function of seeing to the ordinary acts of administration which do not require the convocation of the World Council. Within the World Council, it assumes the task of “Council for Economic Affairs” within the Association according to the terms of Canon 1280.

- 3. The term of office for members of the World Council is six years.
- 4. The directives of the World Council come into force upon the approval of the Rector Major.

Reference: Acts 15: 22-29 (RSV)

Letter of the Apostles

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, with the following letter: “The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

Suggested Reading

In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 148-149.

Lesson 19: Organization of the Association (S1) – Questions for Reflection

1. The organization of the Association is a help for vitality and action. What advantages do you see in it?
2. How do you see the organization within the Association helping to give it strength and effectiveness?
3. How does the service of authority in the Association help you to be a better Cooperator?
4. Do you see yourself becoming part of this worldwide Association? How does it make you feel?

Prayer Experience

Reflect on the communion of the saints and ask some of your favorite Salesian saints to help you better understand the worldwide apostolate of the Salesian Cooperators.

Chapter 4 – The Salesian Family Today

The Missionary Thrust

As a young priest, Don Bosco had desired to be a missionary; but his spiritual director, Father Cafasso, told him gently: “Don Bosco, you can’t even take a coach ride without getting an upset stomach. How will you ever be a missionary? No, you will not go; but you will send out many to preach and teach the word of God.”

In 1875, sixteen years after he had founded the Salesian Society, he sent his first band of ten to begin mission work in Argentina.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw a mighty wave of migration from Europe to Latin America. Immigrants arrived in such great numbers that there were not enough churches and schools to attend to their needs.

It was also a time of Indian wars as the land-hungry newcomers plunged into the interior of the continent, pushing the native Indians off the land, not without bloody warfare.

The first ten Salesian missionaries left Genoa on November 11, 1875, and reached Buenos Aires, where they established their headquarters. They began to work immediately among the immigrants in the impoverished quarter at the port known as “La Boca” (the Devil’s Mouth).

Half the group headed south for Indian territory and were instrumental in helping bring about peace in the war with the Indians.

Plunging southward across the vast pampas, they finally reached the southern tip of the continent, Tierra del Fuego (Land of Fire), at that time the haven of escaped convicts, smugglers, and international adventurers. A museum in Punta Arenas today houses memories of those early trials and triumphs.

In the space of twenty years, they explored the country, established agricultural schools, cultivated vast tracts of land, and spread the word of God. The missionaries’ advance was a succession of conquests, sometimes paid for in their own blood.

They traveled across Patagonia and the Amazon basin. By the turn of the century, the Salesians were working in almost every country in Latin America.

Salesians Serving the Young Around the World Today

There are almost 30,000 Salesian priests, brothers, and sisters working around the world in more than 130 countries. From Yakutsk in Siberia, not far below the Arctic Circle, to Ushuaia, just above the Antarctic Circle, from New York to San Francisco, to Hong Kong and Bangkok, and on to Calcutta, Cairo, Cape Town and around the world, they bring the care and concern of the many Salesian friends and supporters to over two million boys and girls.

St. John Bosco was a genius with young people, especially with those who were poor or in trouble. His one great desire was to spend his whole life working with the young, and he achieved this with amazing generosity, great daring, and inventiveness.

Today’s Salesians try to continue his work, to be “signs and bearers of the love of God for young people” (SDB Const. art. 2) – in schools, youth clubs, parishes, homes for young people in need, and a great variety of activities, all geared toward helping the young to achieve happiness in this life and the next.

The Salesian lifestyle is both practical and academic, with great emphasis on the experience of living in community and working with young people.

The Salesian Family Today

It was Don Bosco himself who conceived the idea of the Salesian Family. Today it comprises 31 groups, working in virtually every country in the world. To name but a few...

The Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), brothers and priests, the second-largest religious institute of men in the Church, today work in more than 130 countries.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), also called the Salesian Sisters, founded by Don Bosco in collaboration with St. Mary Mazzarello, is the largest women's institute in the Church. The FMAs are a dynamic and qualified presence in the challenging world of youth ministry.

The Don Bosco Volunteers (DBV), founded by Bl. Philip Rinaldi, is a secular institute of consecrated women, working in the spirit of Don Bosco. A parallel institute of men is called Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB).

The Salesian Cooperators are lay people and priests who live the Gospel in the world according to the spirit of Don Bosco, at the service of youth and the local Church.

The Salesian Family is present each month in the pages of *The Salesian Bulletin*, a magazine founded by Don Bosco in 1877, published today in more than 50 editions worldwide.