

Lesson 20 – Organization of the Association (Session 2)

Objectives

1. To understand that the Union of Cooperators is not a simple lay Association.
2. To understand that the Cooperator Association belongs to the Cooperators organizationally.
3. To understand that the Cooperators support the organization by their material contributions and by their assuming positions of leadership.
4. To understand the ways you can help further the organization of the Association.

Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry, SDB, pp. 157, 155-156

Canonically the Association is constituted as a “Pious Union”: this is the lowest rung of the *canonical* ladder. It is something like a “Third Order,” since the aim is evangelical perfection (in a Salesian spirit, and not so much through prayer as through charitable activities, especially with reference to the young and poor).

Don Bosco ... entrusted the *general direction* of the Association to “the superior of the Salesian Congregation,” i.e., to himself and his successors. Regional and local direction was in the hands of Salesian directors and lay promoters; but they were not really directly responsible; rather, they were “*representatives*” of the major superior and were to “correspond with the superior” who was to enroll every member “in the common register” (ch. V, 4-5). The local superior was to forward the offerings to the major superior. All this points to Don Bosco’s great desire for *unity*. He wanted his Cooperators to eschew any kind of dispersal of the Salesian apostolic efforts; he wanted orderly action, imbued with the same spirit and in step with the same directives. This is the price of efficiency.

Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter II, Article 8

Economic Solidarity

1. The sense of belonging and of co-responsibility also involves the economic aspect of the Association. For its functioning and for the actualization of the mission at the local, provincial, and world levels, the Salesian Cooperators support the Association with free and generous contributions, as Don Bosco wished: “The Cooperators have no monetary obligation whatsoever, but they will make monthly, or annually, that oblation which the charity of their hearts will tell them.”
2. The Association participates in economic solidarity also through offerings which it sends to the Rector Major. With such offerings and the help of benefactors, it supports the worldwide needs of the Association, missionary initiatives, and other projects tied to the Salesian mission.
3. The Association, through the World Council, elaborates an annual plan of economic solidarity based on animation needs for the development of the entire Association.

Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter V, Article 19

The Local Council

1. At the local level, the Association is directed collegially by a local council. It is composed of both a convenient number of members – ordinarily from three to seven – elected by the Salesian Cooperators from the local center and the SDB or FMA delegate named by the respective provincial. The delegate has an active voice with a right to vote on a par with the other members of the council.

If the local center is set up in one of the houses which depend directly on a Superior General, the naming of the delegate falls to said Superior General.

2. Elected councilors remain in office for three years and can be re-elected for only one further triennium.

After having finished their mandate, they may be re-elected following a period of three intervening years.

For there to be a third consecutive triennium, recourse must be made to the institution of postulation, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, canons 180-183, along with the corresponding dispensation from the Rector Major.

Once the councilors have been elected and have publicly accepted their charge as councilor, they gather together to establish what their roles will be. The division of these roles can take place by secret or public vote.

Within a reasonable amount of time following the date of election, the handing over of the authority from the exiting coordinator to the new coordinator will take place.

3. If the Salesian Cooperator elected by the assembly of the local center renounces the position, the Cooperators with the most votes among those not elected takes his/ her place.

Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter V, Article 21

Tasks of the Local Council Pertaining to Its Apostolic Service

1. In order to assure the functioning of the Association as regards its apostolic and missionary purposes, the tasks of the local council are to:
 - plan, promote, and coordinate the formative and apostolic initiatives of its members;
 - take care of the bonds of union and of communion with the provincial council, or the World Council of the Association where no provincial council exists;
 - strengthen the charismatic ties and bonds of communion with the Salesian Congregation, with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and with other groups of the Salesian Family;
 - decide on the convocation of assemblies;
 - see to the administration of the goods of the Association;
 - approve the budget and the balance to present to the members;
 - accompany the aspirants in their participation in the center and give them a quality formation, taking into account the formation guidelines of the Association adopted by the provincial council;
 - make use of the professional competencies and the spiritual riches of all the members for the good of the Association, valuing their differences and directing them constructively towards the gift of unity;
 - animate initiatives which foster the vocational fidelity of the members and their active participation in the life of the center, taking into account the various groups which compose it, and favoring differentiated paths;
 - make known and spread Don Bosco's spirituality (for example, by means of the Mama Margaret workshops, the "Bosco Homes," and other similar initiatives);
 - propose the vocation of the Salesian Cooperator, planning possible initiatives to welcome aspirants;
 - adopt other initiatives to foster an optimal functioning of the center, respecting the directives of the *Project of Apostolic Life*.
2. Every local council elects from among its lay members:
 - a coordinator
 - a treasurer
 - a secretary.

Every council, moreover, designates from among its members someone to be in charge of formation, who coordinates with the delegate, as a guarantor of the charism. In the case that the designation of such a person is lacking, the coordinator, in dialogue with the delegate, can identify a Salesian Cooperator who is not part of the center to carry out this service.

Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter V, Article 23

Delegates

1. The FMA and SDB provincials, through the delegates, animate the centers established in connection with their works or linked to their provinces.
2. Every local council has an SDB or an FMA delegate. Every provincial council and the World Council have an FMA and an SDB delegate. They are the spiritual animators, and educative and pastoral guides, who are responsible, above all, for Salesian apostolic formation. According to the norms of the *Statutes*, article 26§1, they take part by right on the respective councils.
3. The delegates to the local and provincial levels are named by each one's respective provincial after having heard the thoughts of the members of the respective council and keeping in mind, as much as is possible, the needs of the centers.
4. If the local center is not established in connection with a Salesian work of the SDBs or the FMAs, the provincial can nominate a Salesian Cooperator as a local delegate or another member of the Salesian Family who is adequately prepared.
5. When necessary and opportune, a delegate can fulfill this task for more than one local center.
6. The provincial delegates animate the delegates of the local centers to help foster the assumption of their responsibilities as regards their task of spiritual animation of the Salesian Cooperators and of co-responsibility in their Salesian apostolic formation.
7. The provincial delegates, in understanding with the regional and/or world delegates, promote, if it is the case, updating and formation activities for all the delegates of the province on the Salesian charismatic dimension, with specific reference to their role of animation. These activities are open to the participation of the leadership of the Association.

Reference: Acts 15: 30-35 (RSV)

Delegates at Antioch

So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them. And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren to those who had sent them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter IV, Article 24

The Ministry of the Rector Major

1. The Rector Major of the Society of St. Francis de Sales is the successor of Don Bosco. Through the explicit will of the Founder, he is the superior of the Association and carries out the function of Supreme Moderator within it. He guarantees its fidelity to the Founder's plan and promotes its growth.

2. In his ministry, exercised also through his vicar or the world coordinator, he normally avails himself of the World Council and the World Executive Secretary (the SEM), above all, to animate the entire Association and to coordinate the various formative and apostolic initiatives.

3. The members of the Association nourish sentiments of sincere affection toward the Rector Major and of fidelity to his guidelines.

Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter VI, Article 39

The Administration of the Goods of the Association

1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators, in that it is a public ecclesiastical juridical person, has the ability to acquire, possess, administer, and alienate temporal goods, according to the norms of the Law. The goods owned by the Association as such are ecclesiastical goods.
2. The Rector Major, with the World Council, administers the goods of the Association at the world level and is the competent authority in granting to the local and provincial councils the permissions needed to establish acts of extraordinary administration and alienation which do not require the intervention of the Apostolic See.
3. The councils, through a treasurer chosen from within the council, care for the management of the goods of the Association. The treasurer also prepares the “statement of cash flow” to present annually to the council of the next higher level.

Suggested Reading

In the Footsteps of Don Bosco, pages 150-151

Chapter 5 – The Salesian Cooperators

The Lay Apostolate

Saint John Bosco was ordained to the priesthood in 1841 and went to work in Turin, Italy. There, in the midst of the city's burgeoning prosperity, Don Bosco encountered the temporal and spiritual poverty of thousands of forgotten young people—an ugly byproduct of the Industrial Revolution.

Don Bosco first gathered homeless boys together for healthy recreation and Sunday Mass. Then he fed and clothed them, offered them shelter, gave them job training, and deepened their knowledge and experience of the Faith. Finally, he invited the best of them to follow him as religious in order to offer opportunities to ever greater numbers of needy young people whom the world had abused and cast away. He called his followers "Salesians" after the gentle St. Francis de Sales.

From the beginning of his efforts, Don Bosco regularly availed himself of committed lay helpers whom he called Salesian Cooperators.

The special Salesian spirit taught by Don Bosco is made visible by its charity, youthful dynamism, service to the Church, familial cordiality, joy, and optimism.

The educational philosophy of Don Bosco can be condensed into three words: reason, religion, and kindness. His system is planted firmly on prayer, the Eucharist, and sacramental Reconciliation. In addition, it has considered Mary its model and inspiration and has regarded youthful joyfulness and celebration as its touchstone and finest flowering. In his system, it is not enough to love young people; they must know they are loved.

Most important, it is a system based upon Jesus' way of being and doing. Saint Paul urged his followers to "be imitators of me as I am of Christ." In the same manner, Don Bosco bids his Cooperators to live the Salesian spirit, which brings one ever closer to Mary Help of Christians and her Son, Jesus Christ.

Most Salesian Cooperators are lay members of the Salesian Family; diocesan priests also may join. After a period of formation, Cooperators promise to live Don Bosco's motto, "GIVE ME SOULS ...," which echoes the words of Christ on the cross, "I thirst."

Sharing fully in Don Bosco's mission, as their life's circumstances allow, Cooperators serve the young and others in need. Any Roman Catholic at least 18 years of age may become a Cooperator.

in the spirit of Saint John Bosco, Salesian Cooperators live a rich, spiritual life, sharing Christ's love in their daily activities, especially in the education and salvation of the young and the needy.

You are invited to be a part of this loving mission. Don Bosco's rich legacy to his Salesian Family and to the entire Church includes an apostolic mission, grounded in the Gospels, which leads those in need, especially the young. In the words of Pope Saint John Paul II, this is a mission "to see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will, serve other people, and lead them to communion with God in Christ."

What follows is an abridgement of Saint John Bosco's Rule for Cooperators. The full text can be found at pp. 115-126 of the *Project of Apostolic Life*, which is the present Rule, updated in 2013 and approved by the Holy See. Here I present what I consider essential for understanding the spiritual mission that Don Bosco has bequeathed to us.

There are many pious associations in the Church which are doing much good work according to the spirit of their founders. But Don Bosco wants his followers to be both holy and apostolic, contemplatives in action, working closely with his Salesian priests, brothers, and sisters, from whom they can receive spiritual nourishment and guidance for their work for the Church and society, especially for the young.

Remember: Don Bosco is looking for Cooperators so that the priests can spend more time doing their primary work of evangelizing and administering the sacraments, especially confession and the Eucharist. One hundred years ago the

“Church” initiated a program involving the laity in evangelizing and works of charity. It was called Catholic Action. The Salesian Cooperators were called to take leadership in the movement.

St. John Bosco’s Practical Way of Leading a Life of Virtue

St. John Bosco to the Reader

Turin, July 12, 1876

From the very beginning of the work at the oratories in 1841, there were enthusiastic and keen priests and laymen who came forward to help – for there was a great harvest to be reaped among boys in danger of losing both faith and morals. These co-helpers, or Cooperators, were to be found throughout our history to support and sustain the works God gave us to do. All endeavored to work and fit into our way of life and customs, but there was a general request for a set of Regulations that would serve as a basis and a bond to help preserve uniformity and the spirit that prevailed in our institutes. We hope that this desire will now be satisfied by the present booklet. . . . These rules are a bond by which Catholics who so wish may join the Salesians and work according to a uniform and stable pattern....

Those who wish to practice charity in working for the salvation of souls will have the great reward promised by St. Augustine, “By saving a soul you have predestined your own”; they are also assured of a great spiritual treasure.... May God, so rich in grace and blessings, grant many favors to all those who help to win souls for our Divine Savior, doing good to young people so much in danger, preparing good Catholics for his Church and good citizens for society, so that all may one day find themselves eternally happy in heaven. Amen.

Bond of Union

The Salesian Congregation, having been definitively approved by the Church, may provide a sure and stable bond uniting the Salesian Cooperators. Its primary purpose is to work for the good of young people, on whom society’s happy or evil future depends. We make no claim that what we are proposing is the only means to achieve that end. There are a thousand other ways, and therefore we urge everyone to use freely the means that seem so conducive to that great goal.

The way we are proposing, one of the many, is the *Work of the Salesian Cooperators*. We are inviting good Catholics living in the world to join their efforts to those of the members of this our Congregation. True, the number of Salesians has grown considerably, but it is unequal by far to the numerous requests for help that we are receiving every day from various [places]....

These insistent requests are for [priests and for Salesians] who would undertake the care of young people at risk, who would open houses and schools and who would initiate or sustain missionary activity in places where evangelical workers are greatly needed and desired. It is in order to respond to all these needs that we are looking for Cooperators.