

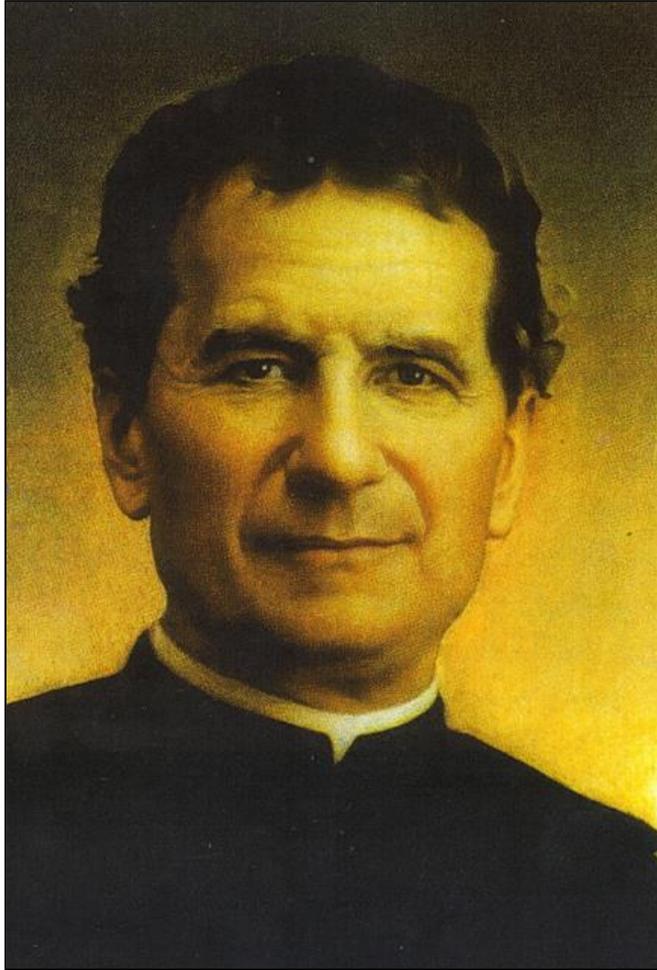
# Salesian Cooperators

## *Discerning the Call*

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### Initial Formation Program





*Lord, thank you for the holy life of St. John Bosco and the saintly family he inspired. Help me to discern whether I am called to follow in his footsteps, growing in holiness by opening my heart to Jesus Christ present in the young and the poor. Amen*

***Mary Help of Christians: Pray for us.***

Placeholder for Letter (Father Tom)

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## ***Introduction to the Salesian Cooperators***

*And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." John 1:43*

It is not by coincidence that you have been drawn to this initial formation program. All of us are called to follow Jesus Christ. Exactly how we should do so is not always clear. Certainly, we must strive to make all our thoughts and actions resemble those of our Lord: by listening to His Word, partaking of the Eucharist, and countless other means. But when it comes to choosing particular paths in life, it is not always easy to know what God wishes us to do.

As a student in the seminary, St. John Bosco faced a similar dilemma. He knew he was called to the priesthood, but was very uncertain about what type of ministry he should undertake. As it happened, God helped him out; He presented to John Bosco, in the concrete situations of everyday life, hundreds of boys who were deprived of countless spiritual and physical needs. His decision was almost made for him: he would work with youth, and in this way, he would become a saint.

For Don Bosco, working with young people was a means to follow Christ and work for Him in the building of His Kingdom. For those called to follow in the footsteps of St. John Bosco, working with the young and the poor is also the way in which we follow Jesus, our Savior, and strive toward the holiness that God desires for all His people. Perhaps you are one of them.

In the following pages, you will find twenty-four lessons prepared for the purpose of discernment to the Salesian Cooperators. The initial formation program includes an introduction to the Salesians, its Spirit, its Mission, its Apostolic Commitment, and its Promise. You will come to understand the Organization of the Association, the Cooperators in the Church and in the World, the Preventive System, and finally, Membership and Formation.

The Program also includes an Appendix which contains *In the Footsteps of Don Bosco, Project of Apostolic Life (PAL) Statutes and Regulations, Plenary and Partial Indulgences, Benefits, a Salesian Calendar, Devotions, Novenas and Prayers* and finally a *Concordance*.

With the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary Help of Christians, St. John Bosco and the entire Salesian family congregation, we pray:

God, My Father,  
I want to be the best person I can be.  
I want to be a saint.  
I offer myself totally to you and I ask  
for the help of the Holy Spirit.  
I pledge to devote myself to the  
following plan of holiness and  
keep it faithfully.

I will be cheerful.  
I will do my duties well.  
I will stay close to Jesus in the Eucharist.  
I will honor and love Mary as my Mother and Helper.  
I will choose to be kind.  
I want to serve rather than be served.

Father, May your grace,  
the intercession of Mary Help of Christians  
and of St. John Bosco,  
together with the assistance of my fellow Christians  
keep me faithful to this plan  
day by day  
Amen.

## ***What Is Formation? The Aim***

### **Introduction to Formation**

Formation is not a goal at which a Salesian arrives. Rather, it is the beginning of a life long journey within the Salesian formation experience: reflection, learning, prayer and action.

Formation is the work of God in our lives. We are continually being formed by God. Thus, when we “do” formation, we are merely assistants to God in the work of formation.

We participate in this formation and cooperate with it, but it is God who forms us. This formation program aims to cooperate with the work of God in the formation of Salesian Cooperators.

Ideally, we are all continuously undergoing formation in as much as we are open to the working of the spirit of God in our lives.

As we go through life, we are involved in “formation”. We gather experiences; these experiences lead us on our relationships in our families, at work, in society and with God. Formation is a process of guided reflection which helps us to understand how we meet God in our daily lives. As you progress through a formation program, your reflections should begin to take on the viewpoint and spirit contained within that program. *For the Salesian Cooperator, that viewpoint is the Salesian Spirit. Father Egidio Vigano SDB, a Rector Major, stated in his 1984 Strenna communication, “We know that what distinguishes our spiritual family in the Church from any other is not Christianity but a special way of translating into its life Christianity’s message and mission. Thus the Salesian Family reads the Gospel through the eyes of Don Bosco and his Distinctive holiness.”* **DA MIHI ANIMAS** (Give me souls, take away the rest).

The Salesian sees the world as God’s dwelling place and desires to understand the immanence of God in the world. So the Salesian Spirit is first and foremost a way of looking at life and of integrating the Gospel into life. From that will flow the Salesian style of action and apostolate.

### **The Goals of Formation**

Formation as a Salesian Cooperator should give you tools to continue this reflective process through the whole of life. This reflection should lead to a reference to the sources of our faith: Scripture, Tradition, the Church’s teachings. These sources, as well as reading of the “signs of the times” called for by Vatican II, support the reflection of the Cooperator. At the same time, reflection helps the Cooperator to integrate these sources into his/her life; it deepens the Cooperator’s understanding of his/her faith. This increased understanding is then translated into prayer. Prayer becomes the means whereby all of the things that are learned are integrated into the relationship with God. Prayer leads to action in that the Cooperator wants to spread to others the relationship which he/she had established with God. This action leads to further experiences, reflection, understanding, prayer and then more action in a never-ending cycle of formation.

Salesians have a specific way of reflecting on experience; they reflect on it from the point of view of the young and the poor. Salesians strive in every situation to answer the questions, “How does this situation/action effect young people and those who are abandoned? Does this situation/action proclaim the Kingdom of God? If not, how can I /we make it reflect God’s Kingdom? *Formation provides the Cooperator the tools to ask and answer these questions and should call the Cooperator to “pray always” as St. Paul admonishes.*

This reflective process leads to an integration of life and faith. The Cooperator realizes that there is no split between what is celebrated at the Eucharist and what is lived throughout the week. Reflection allows the Cooperator to make the Eucharist alive throughout all of life’s experiences. The fundamental call of all Christians is to live the challenge of the Beatitudes in daily life. The Cooperator strives to love this call in a

Salesian context. ***Formation helps the Cooperator learn to reflect on all of life in light of faith and to do this within the Salesian Youth Spirituality.***

Prayer is an essential part of the lifestyle of the Cooperator. Through prayer, he/she experiences the joy and optimism which were so characteristic of Don Bosco's approach to the young. Prayer then strengthens the Cooperator to carry this joy and optimism into the whole of life.

Salesian prayer has certain characteristics. These must be part of the formation experience.

- First and foremost the prayer is youthful. This means that the Prayer is joyful.
- Salesian prayer is of a simple kind and has its roots in life. It is open to new forms and styles which help it to meet the needs of daily life.
- Consistent with the experiences of Don Bosco that Mary was always present in Salesian houses and works, Salesian prayer has a Marian dimension which focuses on Mary as the Immaculate Mother of God who helps all Christians to meet and know her Son.

Prayer in the case of the Cooperator brings about a desire to proclaim the Gospel to the young and the poor. While the young face many problems in today's society, there is, at the same time, a great optimism among the young; they have a joy within them that looks for fulfillment in society. All Salesians have gifts that can be used to better the situation of the young and the poor. These gifts are expressed in many ways. Formation should help the Cooperator discover his/her gifts and how they can be used to proclaim the Gospel to those who are in most need. Coming to an understanding of this style of action is an integral part of any Salesian formation program. It involves the active presence of the Salesian in the midst of those with whom the Salesian works.

This movement to action is characteristic of the Salesian Cooperator. Cooperators are animated to apostolate in the same way that all others Salesians are: ***by a keen awareness of the signs of the times, particularly as they affect the young and the poor. They also go about doing the apostolate in the mode of the Salesian style of action.***

### **What Formation Is**

“A prudent system of training will...develop...human maturity. This will be chiefly attested by a certain stability of character, the ability to make carefully weighed decisions, a sound judgment of events and people. (The candidates) should learn self-control, develop strength of character, and in general value those good qualities which are esteemed by men...such as sincerity, a certain love of justice, fidelity to one's promises, courtesy in deed, modesty and charity in speech”

“The gospel image of the vine and the branches reveals to us another fundamental aspect of the lay faithful's life and mission: the call to growth and a continual process of maturation, of always bearing much fruit.”

*Vatican II, Christifideles Laici, no 57*

## ***Lesson 1 – A Call to Holiness***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand that holiness is for everyone.
2. To understand that this holiness consists in love, in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.
3. To understand that holiness and love are made real in the fulfillment of a mission in line with God's design.
4. To understand that God is love and he invites us to respond to his love with love in the call to holiness

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

Salesian Cooperators have existed in the Church for a hundred years. To be a Cooperator is a practical and up-to-date way of living the love of Christ and of participating in the unique mission of his Church.

If we are to set our examination of this vocation on a basis that is solid and clear, it will help to recall the teaching of the Council, viz., that every baptized Christian has a vocation and that the Holy Spirit invites each and every one to make this vocation real in a way that is both personal and practical.

### **Every Baptized Christian Has A Vocation**

We can never ponder sufficiently these three fundamental truths of the Gospel; the Council has given them special prominence.

**Holiness is for Everyone** – God “calls” us: this is the very meaning of the word “vocation”. We must not be tempted to think that he calls some to sanctity and allows others to live in mediocrity. What sort of a father would resign himself to the mediocrity of even one of his children? God our Father is infinite and has an immense ambition for each of us: “You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. V, 48). Our human vocation is to increase our manhood; our Christian vocation is to grow more and more as sons of God, other Christs. In view of our selfishness and weakness this is a foolish aim; but the task becomes magnificent when the better part of our nature, hungering for the infinite, refuses to rest in the toiling ascent to find God at the summit. “In the Church everyone is called to holiness...It is evident that all the faithful of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life”.

**Holiness Consists in Love, in the Footsteps of Christ** – God calls us because he is the Absolute Love; he invites us to respond with love to his love (cf. 1 John, IV, 11, 16, 19).

Nothing is simpler than the definition of Christian sanctity: it is the practice of the one great commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour” (Matt. XXII, 36, 40), in the footsteps of Jesus, who alone is Holy: “This is my commandment, that you love one another *as I have loved you*. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John, XV, 12, 13). The way of Christian holiness is clearly traced out, but it never comes to an end, for we must never cease loving and imitating Jesus. And since there is one commandment, to love, so there is for Christians one sin, not to love, or not to love more, to halt in the way of filial and fraternal love. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection of charity, they must use their strength according as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. In this way they can follow his image, seeking the will of the Father in all things, devoting themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbour”.

**Holiness and Love are Made Real in the Fulfillment of a Mission** – This third statement is essential if we wish to get down to practicalities. How was Christ the “holy One of God” (Mk. 1, 24) and our greatest example of love for his Father and his brothers? The answer lies in his fidelity to the mission that was

given him; in fulfilling to perfection his task of Prophet (he revealed to the world God's true name and his design for mankind) of King (he laboured to establish his kingdom and to draw all men to his divine will) and of Priest (his whole life was an oblation of love to his Father, and for his glory he established 'the holy nation of the Covenant'). And in these labours for man's salvation he expects the help of the Church and all its members, be they ministers.

So when God calls us (our vocation) and asks us to become holy and to ever increase our love, he does not withdraw us from the world or from the Church. On the contrary, he sends us forth (our mission) to be more deeply immersed in them; he asks us to enter into their enormous and forceful growth, to be indeed the "cooperators" of his salvation plan (1 Cor. III, 9). In practical terms, then, to strive towards holiness and charity we must be builders (each according to his own talents) of a Church and a world where God will be loved and our neighbour loved for His sake. It is not to be wondered at that the Church should make this statement:

"By its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate...The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. They are consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people (cf. 1 Pet. II, 4-10) in order that they may offer spiritual sacrifices throughout the world...the law of love, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, impels all the faithful to promote God's glory through the spread of his kingdom and to obtain for all men eternal life".

### **All Have a Vocation, Practical and Historical**

Everyone has the duty of working out his vocation in a way that is personal and practical at this particular moment in the history of the Church and the world. "God calls me to holiness: he calls me this very day. How shall I express my love? What task am I to fulfill? What service can I render God and my brothers?" This means we have to do some *investigation*, for the practical ways are infinite in number and all valid in themselves.

**Numerous Ways** – We have to consider different methods and our attitude to them. We can attain holiness, love and service in *different forms of life*: Religious life, lay-celibate life, lay-conjugal and family life; and from another point of view, contemplative life, active life and passive life of suffering (at least at certain times). We are capable of holiness, love and service in various *careers and responsibilities*: those of the hierarchical priesthood, those of family, professional, social, political life; and those related to the more important functions of the Church and to the greater requirements of its mission: such are the tasks of atonement, bearing witness, preaching, teaching and education, maintaining and increasing unity, helping those in wretchedness and need..."Lumen Gentium" explains this at length in one of its most beautiful passages which ends thus: "All of Christ's faithful, therefore, whatever be the conditions, duties, and circumstances of their lives, will grow in holiness day by day *through these very situations*, if they accept all of them with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father, and if they co-operate with the divine will by showing every man through their earthly activities the love with which God has loved the world."

**What Choice to Make** – How shall I make my choice? In what form of life and in what responsibility will I find my own vocation? Here again the Council helps us with certain pointers. God gives each of us various indications through "the signs of the times" i.e., those special situations and the appeals made by individuals or groups who call urgently for our help. But above all, and most decisively, God gives us his signs through the natural and supernatural gifts he accords us and through inspirations within the *deep recesses of our hearts*; sometimes these inspirations are strong and urgent, at other times they are a mere whisper. Sometimes they take the form of vivid realizations of Gospel values; a sensitivity to certain needs here and now or in this or that particular place: a deep desire or enthusiasm; an impulse or an act of generosity in the direction of a particular form of love and service. Here is a precious excerpt from the conciliar decree on the apostolate of the laity: "For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1 Cor. XII, 7) "allotting to everyone according as he will" (1 Cor. XII, 11). Thus may individuals, "according to the gift that each had received, administer it to one another" and

become” good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. IV, 10) and build up thereby the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. IV, 16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise *for each* believer *the right and duty to use them* in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church. In so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit who “breathes where he wills” (Jn. 111, 8). At the same time they must act in communion with their brothers in Christ, especially with their pastors”.

So it comes about that a Christian is inspired by the circumstances of his life, by the signs of the times, and by the Spirit of Christ and thus discovers the call of God to holiness, to love, to service in the Church: he becomes an integral part of the great apostolate and spiritual movement set afoot by Don Bosco, and very much alive today; in this is his vocation: to live as a Salesian who is a Cooperator.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 41*

### **A Way to Sanctity**

Salesian Cooperators choose to share the Gospel way traced out by the present *Project of Apostolic Life*.

They commit themselves in a responsible manner to this way which brings one to sanctity: the Association of the Cooperators “is designed to shake many Christians from the languor in which they lie, and to spread the energy of charity.”

The Lord accompanies with the abundance of His grace all those who work in the spirit of the “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle,*” doing good to youth and to ordinary folk.

Rome, December 08, 2006



## ***Lesson 2 – A True Vocation (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the vocation of the Salesian who is a Cooperator.
2. To recognize within yourself the calling to be a Salesian Cooperator.
3. To examine how the Cooperator vocation is directly linked to the mission of the Church.
4. To reflect on our own calling to be laborers in the Lord's Vineyard in the Salesian Cooperator vocation.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

Everyone has the duty of working out his vocation in a way that is personal and practical at this particular moment in their lives in the history of the Church and the World. "God calls me to holiness: he calls me this very day. How shall I express my love? What task am I to fulfill? What service can I render God and my brothers?"

We can attain holiness, love and service in different forms of life: Religious life, lay-celibate life, lay-conjugal and family life. In what form of life and in what responsibility will I find my own vocation? God gives us signs to our vocation through natural and supernatural gifts. He speaks through inspirations within the deep recesses of our heart. They come in the form of a deep desire or enthusiasm.

Don Bosco was inspired by the Holy Spirit to a vocation to the young who were poor, abandoned, in danger and to save them from their spiritual and material wretchedness and to see to their advancement in every way. He founded a group of helpers (religious men and women, SDB's and FMA's) and a more flexible group of helpers (diocesan priests and lay apostles, Cooperators) from all walks of life. He chose St. Francis of Sales, that great model and teacher of charity. All these members are therefore "Salesians", dedicated to the same fundamental work. The Salesian vocation, whether practiced with the vows of religion or without, enjoys the same true authenticity and mission within the Church.

The Salesian Cooperator vocation is none other than a Salesian Vocation lived in the world without a particular form of consecration.

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

### **The Salesian Cooperator: A Specific Vocation in the Church**

1. To commit oneself to be a Salesian Cooperator means to respond to the apostolic Salesian Vocation, gift of the Spirit, taking on a specific way of living the Gospel and participating in the mission of the Church. It is a free choice, defining one's existence.
2. Catholics of whatever cultural or social circumstance can follow this path. They feel called to live their faith life fully involved in each day's concerns, characterized by two attitudes:
  - a. Knowing God as Father and the Love which saves; encountering in the Only-begotten Son Jesus Christ the perfect apostle of the Father; living in intimacy with the Holy Spirit, Who animates the People of God in the world;
  - b. Feeling called and sent on a concrete mission: to contribute to the salvation of youth, committing themselves to Don Bosco's very mission to the young and to ordinary folk.

*Reference: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici, You Go into My Vineyard Too*

“And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too’ (MT 20:3-4).

“And you go too”. The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy and men and women religions. The call is addressed to everyone – lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they received a mission on behalf of the Church and the world. In preaching to the people of Saint Gregory the Great recalls this fact and comments on the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. “Keep watch over your manner of life, dear people, and make sure that you are indeed the Lords labourers. Each person should take into account what he does and consider if he is labouring in the vineyard of the Lord.

*Reference: John 15: 1-5*

I am the vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already by means of the Word that I have spoken to you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain a part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the wine, you are the branches, whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.

*Reference: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici, The Variety of Vocations*

According to the gospel parable, the “householder” calls the labourers for his vineyard at various times during the day: some at dawn, others about nine in the morning, still others about midday and at three, at last, around five (cf. Mt 20:1 ff.). In commenting on these words of the gospel, Saint Gregory the Great makes a comparison between the various times of the call and the different stages in life: “It is possible to compare the different hours” he writes “to the various stages of a person’s life. According to our analogy the morning can certainly represent childhood. The third hour, then, can refer to adolescence, the sun has now moved to the heights, of heaven that is, at this stage a person grows in strength. The sixth hour is adulthood, the sun is in the middle of the sky, indeed at this age the fullness of vitality is obvious. Old age represents the ninth hour, because the sun starts its decent from the height of heaven, thus the youthful vitality begins to decline. The eleventh hour represents those who are most advanced in years... The labourers, then, are called and sent forth into the vineyard at different hours, that is to say, one is led to a holy life during childhood, another in adolescence, another in adulthood and another in old age” (167)

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 108-109.*



## ***Lesson 3 – A True Vocation (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To reflect on the Salesian vocation of the Cooperator in its Salesian character.
2. To reflect on the Salesian vocation of the Cooperator in its secular character.
3. To understand what vocation means.
4. To know some of the qualities needed to become a Cooperator.
5. To understand the two-ways of living the Cooperator vocation.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

Whoever receives a vocation as a Salesian Cooperator can go ahead and follow it with confidence. The Holy Spirit is logical in his works and abounding in generosity. Whoever is called by him along the Salesian way of life will be endowed with the necessary qualities to stride confidently along that way; he will be enriched with helpful gifts, gradually “converted” and sustained in faith and joy. The Cooperator will lean confidently on the Divine strength and tenderness; he will frequently turn to God in humble and earnest prayer.

Cooperators are those members of the Church who commit themselves in a special manner to Christian perfection in their particular state of life, placing themselves at the service of the Church:

- In the apostolate of youth in particular with the Salesian spirit and educative method.
- In union with the entire Salesian family
- Capable of shouldering their own apostolic responsibilities.

The Cooperator as originally envisaged by Don Bosco, is a true Salesian in the world, i.e., a Christian, be he layman, lay religious or priests, who, even if he has no religious vows:

- Follows a vocation to holiness,
- By offering himself to work for the young and ordinary working people,
- In the spirit of Don Bosco,
- In the service of the local Church,
- And in the communion with the Salesian Congregation.

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

### **One Vocation: Two Ways of Living It**

1. Don Bosco conceived the Association of Salesian Cooperators as being open both to laity and to the secular clergy.
2. Lay Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolic commitment and live the Salesian spirit, with lay characteristics and sensitivities, in the ordinary situations of life and work.
3. Secular bishops, priests, and deacons who are Salesian Cooperators live their ministry taking inspiration from the pastoral charity of Don Bosco, whose priestly life is a model of one which gives pride of place to working with commitment in behalf of young people and in places where ordinary folk work and live.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

For the Salesians who are religious Cooperators and the Salesians who are lay Cooperators there is no doubt that the finest aspect of such a vocation lies in the fact of living in the bosom of an immense family.

The elements common to all the members of the family are:

- The same founder, Don Bosco, represented today by his successor the Rector Major.
- The same sharing in Don Bosco's God-given charism.
- The search for holiness (according to one's own state in life).
- By means of a mission.
- The search and the mission both being according to a special spirit.
- And according to a specific form of brotherliness and collaboration.

Qualities needed to become a Cooperator:

- That the Holy Spirit is calling us to find our position in the Church and to carry out our vocation in its common mission.
- To take the Gospel seriously and live our lives as authentic Christians.
- To be sensitive to the problems of the young and the poor.
- To know Don Bosco and correspond with his spirit, his work and methods in developing our own supernatural gifts.
- To have a sense of brotherliness in co-responsibility and collaboration as disciples in action.

“It is necessary to see clearly that being a Salesian Cooperator is to answer a true call: it is to accept an authentic Salesian vocation, to follow a true apostolic vocation.”

### **Reference Webster's Dictionary**

Vocation – A summons or strong inclination to a particular state or course of action: a divine call.

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem – Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People*

The apostolate is lived in faith, hope and charity poured out by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of all the members of the Church. And the precept of charity, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, urges all Christians to work for the glory of God through the coming of his kingdom and for the communication of eternal life to all men, that they may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (Jn 17:3)

All Christians, accordingly, rest the noble obligation of working to bring all men throughout the whole world to hear and accept the divine message of salvation.

*Reference: James 2: 14-18*

My brothers! What good is it for a man to say “I have faith” if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in your saying to them, “God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!” – if you don't give them the necessities of life? This is how it is with faith if it is alone and has no actions with it, then it is dead.

But someone will say “You have faith and I have actions”. My answer is, “Show me how you can have faith without actions; I will show you my faith by my actions”.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 111-112.*



## ***Lesson 4 – Mary, Our Help***

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the role of Mary in the life and apostolate of Don Bosco.
2. To reflect on the place of Mary in the prayer life of the Cooperator and the Salesian Family.
3. To reflect on the necessity of asking Mary for the strength needed to be a Salesian.
4. To understand the role of Mary as our Mother, guide and teacher.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

“The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life (in the lay Christian) is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles. While leading a life common to all men, one filled with family concerns and labours, she was always intimately united with her Son and co-operated in the work of the Saviour in a manner altogether special. Now that she has been taken up into heaven, “with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage...” All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her motherly concern”.

“Mary most holy is the foundress and will be the sustainer of our works.” The Salesian is convinced of the special, unquestioned role which Mary – always the hand-maid of God and co-worker with his Son – has had in the life of Don Bosco and of the Congregation. She is the watchful mother of his boys and their “interior teacher”. She is, besides, HIS mother; hence he has for her, the immaculate one and his help, a tender and strong devotion, simple and true, enlightened and dynamically practical...”

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 20, #1*

### **In Communion with Mary, Help of Christians, and our Saints**

1. Salesian Cooperators, like Don Bosco, nurture a filial love for Mary Help of Christians, the Mother of the Church and of humanity. She cooperated in the salvific mission of the Savior and continues to do so also today, as Mother and Helper of the People of God. She is the special guide of the Salesian Family. Don Bosco entrusted the Salesian Cooperators to Her so that they might receive protection and inspiration in their mission.
2. They turn with particular affection to Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church. They have trustful recourse to the intercession of St. John Bosco, “Father and Teacher” of the young and of all the Salesian Family.
3. Among the models of apostolic life, they venerate, with predilection, St. Francis de Sales, St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Alexandrina da Costa, Mamma Margaret, and all the other Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables of the Salesian Family. Knowledge of their lives is a font of inspiration and prayer.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 20, #1*

### **Experience of Committed Faith**

In the Immaculate Virgin, Help of Christians they discover the deepest elements of their vocation: Being true “cooperators of God” in the realization of his salvific plan. They turn to Mary, Help of Christians and Mother of the Good Shepherd, asking her for the strength needed to be practically involved in the salvation of the young.

*Reference: Redemptoris Mater – The Mother of the Redeemer*

Given Mary's relationship to the Church as an exemplar, the Church is close to her and seeks to become like her: "Imitating the Mother of her Lord and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she preserves with virginal purity and integral faith, a firm hope, and a sincere charity". Mary is thus present in the mystery of the Church as model. But the Church's mystery also consists in generating people to a new and immortal life: this is her motherhood in the Holy Spirit. And here Mary is not only the model and figure of the Church; she is much more. For, "with maternal love she cooperates in the birth and development" of the sons and daughters of Mother Church. The Church's motherhood is accomplished not only according to the model and figure of the Mother of God but also with her "cooperation".

She cooperated, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, with a maternal love. Here we perceive the real value of the words spoken by Jesus to his Mother at the hour of the Cross: "Woman, behold your son" and to the disciple: "Behold your mother" (Jn 19: 26-27). They are words which determine Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples and they express – as I have already said – the new motherhood of Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world. It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit who raises up the new children of God, redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ: that Spirit whom together with the Church Mary too received on the day of Pentecost.

Of the essence of motherhood is the fact that it concerns the person. Motherhood always establishes a unique and unrepeatable relationship between two people: between mother and child and between child and mother. Even when the same woman is the mother of many children, her personal relationship with each one of them is of the very essence of motherhood. For each child is generated in a unique and unrepeatable way, and this is true both for the mother and for the child. Each child is surrounded in the same way by that maternal love on which are based the child's development and coming to maturity as a human being.

This filial relationship, this self entrusting of a child to its mother, not only has its beginning in Christ but can also be said to be definitively directed towards him. Mary can be said to continue to say to each individual the words which she spoke at Cana in Galilee: "Do whatever he tells you". For he, Christ, is the one Mediator between God and mankind; he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6); it is he whom the Father has given to the world, so that man "should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). The Virgin of Nazareth became the first "witness" of this saving love of the Father and she also wishes to remain its humble handmaid always and everywhere. For every Christian, for every human being, Mary is the one who first "believed", and precisely with her faith as Spouse and Mother she wishes to act upon all those who entrust themselves to her as her children.

*Reference: John 19: 25-27*

### **Jesus and his Mother**

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopus, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, "Woman, this is your son". Then to the disciple he said, "This is your mother". And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 113-114.*



## ***Lesson 5 – In Union with God***

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the dimensions of the Salesian Youth Spirituality.
  - a. Spirituality of Daily Life
  - b. Joy and Optimism
  - c. Friendship with the Lord Jesus
  - d. Communion in the Church
  - e. Responsible Service
2. To apply the principles of the Salesian Youth Spirituality to the situation of the Cooperator.
3. To re-examine attitudes toward the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
4. To focus on the importance of daily growth in the relationship with God.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

The Salesian Cooperator vocation emerges as a rewarding and safe way to sanctity. Its mission, its specific spirit, the evangelical requirements it implies: there are so many sanctifying values enabling us to live united with God in the resemblance of Christ. In a particular way the divine aspect of the mission should not be overlooked. In a burst of faith every Salesian can say: “It is the Lord who beckons me on. I am here in his name. He is with me and I am with him. And I find Him in those to whom he sends me. May his grace inspire and direct my activities. It is for him that I work, leading to him those he has entrusted to me.” It is all a matter of learning with this apostolicity whereby we make ourselves one with the Christ-Servant of the Gospel.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 17*

### **Style of Action**

Salesian Cooperators live as “good Christians and honest citizens,” sanctifying their existence in everyday life and rooting their action in union with God. They believe in the value of life, of giving freely without seeking return, of fraternity, and of “being neighbor.” They cultivate those attitudes which foster education to the joys of daily life and they communicate this to others.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 19*

### **Style of Prayer**

1. The Salesian Cooperators are convinced that they can do nothing if they are not in union with Jesus Christ. They invoke the Holy Spirit Who enlightens them and gives them strength day by day. Their prayer, rooted in God’s Word, is simple and trusting, joyous and creative, permeated with apostolic ardor, holding tight to life and extending into it. So as to nourish their prayer life, Salesian Cooperators have recourse to the spiritual resources offered by the Church, by the Association, and by the Salesian Family. They participate actively in the liturgy and value the forms of popular piety which enrich their spiritual life.
2. They reinvigorate their faith through the Sacraments. They find nourishment in the Eucharist for their apostolic charity. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation they encounter the Mercy of the Father, Who impresses upon their life a dynamic and continuous conversion and makes them grow in their capacity to forgive.

3. They reinforce their interior and apostolic life with spirituality moments, including those offered by the Association.

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem – Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord's words, "He who abides in me and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing"(John 15:5). This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy. These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God's will they grow in that union. In this way the laity must make progress in holiness in a happy and ready spirit, trying prudently and patiently to overcome difficulties. Neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life, in keeping with the words of the Apostle, "Whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).

Such a life requires a continual exercise of faith, hope, and charity. Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal.

Impelled by divine charity, they do good to all men, especially to those of the household of the faith, laying aside "all malice and deceit and pretense, and envy, and all slander" (1 Peter 2:1), and thereby they draw men to Christ. This charity of God, "which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5), enables the laity really to express the spirit of the beatitudes in their lives. Following Jesus in His poverty, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor inflated by their abundance, imitating Christ in his humility, they have no obsession for empty honors but seek to please God rather than men, ever ready to leave all things for Christ's sake and to suffer persecution for justice sake, as they remember the words of the Lord, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt 16:24). Promoting Christian friendship among themselves, they help one another in every need whatsoever.

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior. Having now been assumed into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy fatherland. All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her maternal care.

*Reference: Mark 14: 32-42*

### **Gethsemane**

They came to a small estate called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Stay here while I pray". Then he took Peter and James and John with him. And a sudden fear came over him, and great distress. And he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. "Wait here, and keep awake." And going on a little further he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him by. "Father!" he said "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it. He came back and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Had you not the strength to keep awake one hour? You should be awake, and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak". Again he went away and prayed, saying the same

words. And once more he came back and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy; and they could find no answer for him. He came back a third time and said to them, “You can sleep on now and take your rest. It is all over. The hour has come. Now the Son of Man is to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up! Let us go! My betrayer is close at hand already.”

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 114-116.*



## ***Lesson 6 – Salesian Spirit (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To relate Don Bosco's words "It is not enough to love the young. They must know they are loved".
2. To understand the essence of the Salesian spirit: Joyful, Dynamic, Apostolic charity with its accent on youth.
3. To know whom is to be served by the Salesian Cooperators.
4. To recognize the Salesian spirit is a spirit of action.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

It is essential that we have in the world friends, benefactors and people who practice the Salesian spirit living with their families, as the Cooperators do" (Don Bosco; agenda for 1 Gen. Chapter).

Imbued with the Salesian spirit you understand what close rapports you have with the complex of works sustained and promoted by the Catholic laity" (Pius XII to the Cooperators, 12 Sept. 1952).

"Furthermore, the laity who in pursuit of their vocation have become members of one of the associations or institutes, approval by the Church, should try faithfully to adapt the special characteristics of the spiritual life which are proper to these as well."

The essence of the spirit is dynamic, apostolic charity. "Our life style and the way of doing things taught us by Don Bosco correspond to our mission: pastoral love, young and alive, is at the very heart of our spirit, just as it was for Don Bosco as seen in the very beginnings of our Society. It is this ardent apostolic drive which makes us seek souls and serving God alone". (New Const. SDB, art 40). At the heart of all Christian living is charity, i.e., love as existing in God, as explained and lived by Christ.

At the core of this apostolic charity, characterized by its accent on youth, is an enthusiastic drive that is joyous and generous.

This was truly the tenor of Don Bosco's life; he was possessed of a magnificent and apostolic urge, and it was always in evidence. It was expressed in his motto, "Lord, give me souls" (apostolic love for his neighbor) and in his often repeated "We must work for the greater glory of God".

The activity of every member of the Salesian family has three characteristics:

1. **Unflinching Zeal and Sacrifice** – "Work and temperance, and the Congregation will flourish". On the other hand seek comfortable surroundings and a life of ease and we shall cease to exist. The Salesian gives himself to his mission with a ceaseless energy. For these reasons work in the apostolate for us has a mystic value: it has a divine quality and is urgent: to achieve the end we should be ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, fatigue and rejection whenever the glory of God and the salvation of souls require it."
2. **Initiative and Flexibility When Faced with Crises** – "The Salesian should be a realist and attentive to the signs of the times and be convinced that God calls through the needs of a particular time and place.
3. **A Lively Understanding of the Church in its Growth and Unity** – "We have to see the Church as the unifying and animating centre of all the forces which work for salvation. For the Pope we have a special reverence and loyalty, towards bishops charity and obedience and for all other Religious families deep esteem.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 3, Article 11*

### **Style of Action**

1. Don Bosco was a practical and enterprising man, an untiring and creative worker, animated by an uninterrupted and profound interior life. Faithful to his spirit and attentive to reality, Salesian Cooperators have a sense of the concrete. They discern the signs of the times and with a spirit of initiative push themselves to give appropriate responses to the needs of the youth in their territory and in society. They are constantly ready to verify and to readapt their response.
2. They accompany their action with an attitude of contemplation, which urges them to seek and to recognize the mystery of God's presence in everyday life and the face of Christ in their brothers and sisters. Moreover, sustained by the Spirit, they confront with serenity the difficulties of life and the joys and the sufferings which accompany their apostolic work.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 3, Article 12*

### **Spiritual Life**

1. The Salesian Cooperators nourish their interior life through daily dialogue with the Lord, participation in the Sacraments, and with *Lectio Divina*.
2. They celebrate traditional Salesian Feast Days.
3. If they have the possibility, they also participate in the spiritual exercises, retreats, and other initiatives posed by the Association.
4. They value spiritual guidance as accompaniment, exercised particularly by Salesians (both Religious – FMA and SDB – and lay).
5. The Association is open to all. In its planning, it will facilitate the participation of its own members and of those who feel one with the Salesian charism.

*Reference: The Jerusalem Bible Mark 12: 28-34*

### **The Greatest Commandment of All**

One of the scribes who had listened to them debating and had observed how well Jesus had answered them, now came up and put a question to him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied "This is the first: Listen Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, "Well spoken, Master what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice." Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God". And after that no one dared to question him anymore.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 117-118.*



## ***Lesson 7 – Salesian Spirit (Session2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the ways of relating to others in the Salesian spirit.
2. To understand the method of prayer that is to be followed in the Salesian spirit.
3. To understand Mary's special role in the Salesian spirit.
4. To recognize that the Salesian spirit is a family spirit.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

### **The Ways of Relating to Others in the Salesian Spirit**

In relating to other members of the Salesian family every member should be inspired by the following virtues:

1. **Loving Kindness** – The Salesian's manner of action is to seek to do all things well, with due measure and simplicity. He is open and cordial, ready to make the first advance and to receive people with kindness, respect and patience, especially the young. His love is truly personal and affectionate, showing himself to be a father and friend and arousing friendship in response. This is the kindliness so much recommended by Don Bosco.
2. **Family Spirit** – “The community becomes a family when affection is reciprocal and the young feel at their ease. In this climate of mutual confidence people feel the need and the joy of sharing everything and relations are governed not so much by recourse to rules as by faith and goodness of heart”.
3. **Optimism and Joy** – “Let nothing perturb you” Don Bosco used to say. Because God has sent us we have complete confidence in his providence and are not discouraged by difficulties. There is also the optimistic humanism of St. Francis of Sales which helps us to believe in the natural and supernatural resources of man without however ignoring his weakness. With this background we know how to make our own what is good in the world and refuse to lament over our times. We “hold fast to what is good” especially if it is attractive to the young. We make our own St. Paul's exhortation, “Rejoice in the Lord always”. This is the witness we must give to youth. “...The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace...” and this is where our own hope and our openness to the spirit is rooted.

### **The Method of Prayer that is to be Followed in the Salesian Spirit**

1. **Prayer that is Simple and Vital** – “Our style of work and our relationships with others demand that we must always be renewing the divine element in our apostolic commitment: “...Apart from me you can do nothing”. We have but few practices of piety, but we pray without ceasing and after the manner of Don Bosco's own union with God aspire to become contemplatives in action by praying in simple heart to heart colloquy with Christ, with the Father conscious of his presence, with Mary our helper”.
2. **Generous Openness to the Sacramental World** – “The Eucharist is the centre and the goal of the life of the Christian, as a binding force and a dynamic nucleus of the brotherly community. It is an encounter with the fullness of the same mystery of salvation in whose service he spends his life. The life of a Salesian is especially founded on this truth. The enthusiasm and the richness of all his activity take their origin from the Eucharistic mystery.

For this reason the Salesian cultivates the sense of liturgical celebration and caters for its needs, both in its interior qualities and by its external beauty, well aware that young people are attracted by the splendor and the truth of these celebrations.

In the sacrament of penance the Salesian meets Christ who pardons him and who pours into him the meaning of the ever-present necessity of the penitential spirit.

3. **Special Confidence in Mary** – “Mary most holy is the foundress and will be the sustainer of our works.” The Salesian is convinced of the special, unquestioned role which Mary – always the hand-maid of God and co-worker with his Son – has had in the life of Don Bosco and of the Congregation. She is the watchful mother of his boys and their “interior teacher”. She is, besides, HIS mother; hence he has for her, the immaculate one and his help, a tender and strong devotion, simple and true, enlightened and dynamically practical...”

To grasp the originality of the Salesian spirit we must take the total of its characteristics and examine how each affects the other. The building materials can be found in various places, but the Salesian building affected is a special kind. The instruments and notes are common property, but the “Salesian harmony” is unique. In its own fashion it makes music to the glory of God and fills the Church with joy.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 13*

### **A Precious Heritage**

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco lived and passed down to the members of his Family an original style of life and action: the Salesian spirit.

The Salesian spirit is a quintessential Gospel experience, whose source is in the very heart of Christ, who urges those who live it to become gift and to give service. It is nourished by the carrying out of apostolic charity, the principal interior dynamic which unites passion for God and passion for neighbor. It is manifested in a Sacramental spirituality, which is made actual by living daily life with joy and optimism and in responsible service within the ecclesial community and civic society. It requires a demanding “ascetical method” expressed through a serene and joyous countenance, in keeping with Don Bosco’s urging: “work and temperance.”

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 20*

### **Experience of Committed Faith**

1. Salesian Cooperators welcome this spirit as a gift of the Lord to the Church and make it fruitful in accordance with their particular circumstance, lay or ministerial. Each one participates in Don Bosco’s spiritual experience, lived with particular intensity by those first Cooperators among the in the Oratory at Valdocco, and they commit themselves to living out the Sequela Christi, the following of Christ.
2. In the Immaculate Virgin, Help of Christians they discover the deepest elements of their vocation: Being true “cooperators of God” in the realization of his salvific plan. They turn to Mary, Help of Christians and Mother of the Good Shepherd, asking her for the strength needed to be practically involved in the salvation of the young.
3. They foster an experience in practice of ecclesial communion through the Association, which is a living part of the Church.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 15*

### **Centrality of Apostolic Love**

1. The heart of the Salesian spirit is apostolic and pastoral charity. It makes the mercy of the Father, the salvific love of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit present among the young. Don Bosco expressed this with his motto: *“Da mihi animas, cetera tolle.”* He signified it in the name “Salesians,” by choosing St. Francis de Sales, model of Christian humanism, of apostolic dedication, and of amiability, and promoter of lay spirituality, as his patron.
2. This charity is, for Salesian Cooperators, a gift of God, which unites them to Him and to the young. Further, it takes its inspiration from the maternal solicitude of Mary, who supports and sustains them in their daily witness.

*Reference: 1 Peter 3: 8-12*

### **Christian Conduct**

Finally, all of you be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate, humble. Do not return evil for evil, or insult for insult; but, on the contrary, a blessing, because to this you were called, that you might inherit a blessing. For: “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep the tongue from evil and the lips from speaking deceit, must turn from evil and do good, seek peace and follow after it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears turned to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against evil-doers.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 118-120.*



## ***Lesson 8 – Communion and Collaboration (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To see ourselves as brothers and sisters in Christ in mutual exchange and collaboration.
2. To know how to work together in a true Salesian Family fashion.
3. To understand that being part of this unique, immense, brotherly community is one of God's greatest gifts our vocation enjoys.
4. To know that to strengthen this unity the Salesian Congregation has a "special responsibility of preserving unity of spirit".

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

To emphasize the oneness of all who unite themselves about Don Bosco, the SGC has chosen the truly Salesian term "family". The fraternal spirit discussed here refers to that practiced among the Cooperators themselves. But it refers more especially to relations between the Cooperators and the other sections of the Salesian family. Being part of this unique, immense, brotherly community is one of God's greatest gifts our vocation enjoys.

A superficial glance at the history of the Salesians tells us that Don Bosco first founded the Salesian Congregation (1859); next, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872); and finally the Union of Salesian Cooperators (1876). This is not at all correct if we understand it in the sense that he founded three institutes in parallel and then sought somehow to unite them. The fact was that with full intention he actually founded one single "association of apostolic forces", one single family, which comprised different and complementary groups. The past with its problems has blurred the vision of these groups so that they have lost sight of the fact that originally they all belonged to this one common Reality. Today's problems, however, are drawing them together again, leading them to take stock of their essential oneness, and to be more aware of the "common Salesian good". Each group is thus invited to draw practical conclusions for its own way of life and its mutual relationships with the other groups. The concept of 'family is applied in a different way to these various groups according to the nature of their relationship. It excludes no-one who is involved in the 'Salesian happening', but it does clarify just how things stand in practice and exactly what constitutes the identity of the various members.

Who belongs to the Salesian family in the strict sense? Those who share the Salesian charisma, i.e. those who make the Salesian reality their vocation; who have the urge of the Holy Spirit to seek holiness by dedicating themselves to the Salesian mission, according to the Salesian spirit; those, in short who work together in a spirit of co-responsibility to achieve this mission and practice the Salesian spirit.

The genuine spiritual brotherliness which unites all the members of the Salesian family should express itself in their various meetings and mutual relationships. This was Don Bosco's ideal right from the beginning. "The members of the Salesian Congregation will consider all Cooperators as brothers in Jesus Christ and will have their recourse to them every time that their work can help to the greater glory of God and to the advantage of souls. With the same freedom when the need arises the Cooperators will turn to the Salesian Congregation.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 21*

### **Brothers and Sisters in Don Bosco**

Their common apostolic Vocation and membership in the same Association makes Salesian Cooperators spiritual brothers and sisters. Indeed, "united with one heart and on soul alone" they live their communion with those bonds characteristic of Don Bosco's spirit.

They joyously take part in the “family life” of the Association through getting to know each other, growing together, exchanging faith experiences, and working on apostolic projects.

They foster the associative by welcoming each other reciprocally.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 23*

### **Participation in and Ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family**

1. In fidelity to Don Bosco’s vision that “weak forces, when united, become strong, and if one cord taken by itself is easily broken, it is rather difficult to break three united,” Salesian Cooperators care for the communion and the collaboration with the other Groups of the Salesian Family. They do this by means of reciprocal knowledge and information, reciprocal spiritual and formative help, and involvement in common apostolic tasks, with respect for the identity and autonomy of each Group.
2. Participation on the Salesian Family Consulta/ Commission at the different levels and the link with the pastoral structures of the Church and civic institutions foster the common search for new initiatives. The Salesian mission promotes and gives witness to the rich spiritual and apostolic inheritance it has received.
3. Salesian Cooperators feel close to all the Groups belonging to the Salesian Family because they are all heirs of the Salesian charism and spirit.

They are open to and foster every form of collaboration, especially with lay groups, respecting the identity and autonomy of each one.

*Reference: Acts 2: 42-47*

### **Life Among the Believers**

They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers. Many miracles and wonders were done through the apostles, which caused everyone to be filled with awe. All the believers continued together in close fellowship, and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Every day they continued to meet as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating the food with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 1, Article 5*

### **The Association in the Salesian Family**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators is one of the Groups of the Salesian Family. Together with the Society of St Francis de Sales, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and other officially recognized Groups, it is a bearer of the common Salesian Vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco’s project in the Church and in the world.

The Association brings to the Salesian Family those values which are specific to 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 4, Article 25*

**Particular Bonds with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators has a “bond of stable and secure union” with the Society of St Francis de Sales and particular charismatic ties with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Every Salesian Community (SDB and FMA), at both the Provincial and Local levels, feels involved, as Don Bosco wished, in the task of “supporting and increasing” the Association, of contributing to the formation of its members, and of making known and promoting their *Project of Apostolic Life*.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 120-121.*



## ***Lesson 9 – Communion and Collaboration (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To reflect on the importance of familial support in the Salesian spirit.
2. To understand how all the groups of the Salesian family work together for one common goal.
3. To understand how meetings and mutual exchange will give a chance for each group to exchange its riches.
4. To understand how the Cooperators are autonomous and assume their own responsibilities.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

To a certain extent one could apply to the Salesian family the analogy St. Paul uses when speaking of the church. It is one body made up of different members. St. Paul insists on two things; the care that must be given to unity in the body, and the importance that each member perform its proper function well for the good of the other members and the general good of the body as a whole. “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing....The eye cannot say to the hand “I have no need of you” (1Cor. XII). It is important for the other Salesian family groups and for the family as a whole that the Cooperators have their own particular character and that they be responsible for their own proper part in the fulfillment of their mission.

All this presupposes a true autonomy which allows the Cooperators to govern themselves and to assume their own responsibilities – always bearing in mind, of course that they work “in common”. They lean on the Salesian Congregation, and this gives them their stability; and they receive spiritual nourishment from it. But they should not depend on it either in the field of administration or apostolic activities; their work is for the total Salesian mission not for the Religious Salesians as such, nor merely for their particular section of that mission. Don Bosco had already taken into consideration that the Cooperators would have their own activities, supported by “their own material means or by help received from others, One could sum up this autonomy, then, as a freedom to decide and act, with and independence that is relative, not total. This freedom accepts the bonds of unity, and pleasures them.

Regular and occasional contacts, meetings and mutual exchange will give a chance to each group to communicate its riches “so that they may become the riches of all. (SGC 174) The Religious Salesians bring to the Cooperators their “witness proper to consecrated Religious at the service of the Salesian mission. The Cooperators on their part bring to the SDB and FMA the stimulus of their example and enthusiastic projects, “a more realistic outlook, so that the efficiency of pastoral work may be increased’.

The field of Salesian activity constitutes a vast area for collaboration. At the moment the most immediate and most common is educational and pastoral work, and the material help given by the Cooperators to the Religious Salesian men and women in their various enterprises. “You are our first and essential collaborators: You are our collaborators in whatever is to be done for the glory of God, but especially where we lack personnel or material means. (1<sup>st</sup>. Gen Chapter, 1877)”.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 2, Article 6*

### **Family Spirit**

1. To make the sense of belonging to the Association grow, Salesian Cooperators support each other through the sharing of spiritual goods.
2. They show their human and Christian solidarity in a concrete way to those Salesian Cooperators who are ill and in difficulty, accompanying them also with their affection and their prayer.

3. In communion with the deceased Salesian Cooperators and benefactors, and grateful for their witness, they continue their mission with fidelity. They pray for them, in particular, in the celebration of the Mass in memory of Mamma Margaret.
4. In fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church, and to Her pastoral guidelines concerning family issues, the Association gives attention to those members who are undergoing the consequences of separation and/ or divorce. The Association accompanies them along this difficult life and faith journey which they are traveling. Such an attitude will be met with a similar one on the part of the member, with the commitment to live one's present condition trusting in the infinite mercy of the Father, and maintaining a tenor of life which is coherent with the commitments assumed with the *Promise*.
5. In keeping with the Family Spirit, the Association shows itself open to former Religious of the Salesian Family who have legitimately left their Institute, and who feel themselves forever tied to the spirit of Don Bosco.

For these persons, official entrance into the Association requires accepting the *Project of Apostolic Life*. If the person requests it, he or she agrees with the Delegate on a formative itinerary. He/ she will also decide as to the manner of the making of the Promise, whether it will be public or private.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 2, Article 9*

### **Particular Bonds with the Society of St. Francis of Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

1. Relations with the SDB confreres and the FMA Sisters develop in a climate of reciprocal trust. The animation of the Centers which are established at Salesian works involves the Delegates, in particular, their respective Provincial, and the Local Religious Community. These have the task of contributing in various ways to the formation of the members so that they might promote and give witness to the Salesian charism, above all in the lay environment.
2. The SDB and FMA Provincials, with the collaboration of the Animators and Directors, guarantee unity in communion and in the mission. They commit themselves to promote the spiritual growth of the Centers and to involve the Religious Communities in witnessing to the values of sanctity and in the generous service of animation.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 2, Article 10*

### **Ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family**

1. The Salesian Cooperators, recognizing the common spirituality and mission which unite them to the other Groups in the Salesian Family, work in solidarity and in synergy in confronting the pastoral challenges of the Salesian mission.

The ties with the Groups of the Salesian Family are expressed particularly in apostolic co-responsibility. This requires, in some cases, the mutual commitment to carry out common objectives, to share educational concerns, and to make the Preventive System known.

Each and every Salesian Cooperator is personally responsible for animating and promoting the spiritual inheritance received.

2. In order to realize this communion with the Groups of the Salesian Family in a concrete way, the Salesian Cooperators are called to participate actively in encounters and celebrations; days of

formation and of updating; moments of animation, friendship , and familiarity; and days of prayer, retreats, and spiritual exercises.

3. They are particularly open to collaboration with the Salesian Lay Associations while respecting their diverse identities.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 122-123.*



## ***Lesson 10 – Apostolic Commitment (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To focus on the importance of daily spiritual growth in the relationship with God.
2. To understand that the apostolate of the Cooperator depends on their own conformity with the Church's aim as well as on their own Christian witness.
3. To understand that a vast field of action is open to the Salesian Cooperator apostolate.
4. To see how the Salesian Cooperator vocation strengthens this commitment.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

“Your life must be exemplary in every sense of the word...the “Action Saint” has invited you to practice the same rule of the spiritual life he gave to his Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. You do not live the Religious Community Life; you live with your families. In the circumstances you have chosen to apply yourself seriously to that most exalted of all tasks, Christian perfection. This imports a special interval and external attitude towards God: it is for this that Don Bosco's rule of life is meant to train you”.

*Pius XII to the Cooperator, 12 Sept 1952*

We must now delve deeper and contemplate Christ himself as Don Bosco saw him and imitated him. In his whole life Don Bosco made it plain that his only desire was to reproduce Christ and emphasize certain traits in his personality, and to make his whole mission nothing other than the spreading of Christ's saving action.

Don Bosco asks of his sons and disciples that they look to Christ and try to resemble him in those things in his life that most correspond with their God-given mission and the spirit that animates it. In the first edition of the Constitutions, Article 1, Don Bosco wrote, “The aim of this Congregation is an assembly of men trying to perfect themselves by imitating the virtues of our divine Savior, especially in charity towards the young who are poor”.

To follow Christ in a Salesian Way we need to:

1. **Imitate Christ in Untiring Work for the Kingdom of God** – As a Salesian we must be greatly concerned about the responsibility as an apostle. The Salesian Cooperator must accept the responsibility of being one of the workers for the harvest. His whole being should cry out “Father, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come.”
2. **Imitate Christ on Adapting the Way of the Good Shepherd** – At the age of nine, John Bosco dreamed of Christ the Good Shepherd and received from him the secret of success in education. “Not with blows but with gentleness and charity”. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep, calls each by name, makes himself loved by them, leads them to good pastures, hastens to seek out those who have wandered away, defends them and gives his life for his sheep. And so it must be with every Salesian.
3. **Imitate Christ in Ceaseless Effort for Unity** – In Don Bosco there was an over riding desire for unity, for the family, for the brethren in community, for “one heart and one mind”.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 8*

### **Apostolic Commitment**

1. Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolate, first of all, through their daily tasks. They follow Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, sent by the Father to serve the people of the world. This is why they are committed to putting into practice the Gospel ideal of love for God and for one's neighbor in the ordinary circumstances of life.
2. Animated by the Salesian spirit, they give special attention to young people, especially to those who are poorest or victims of any kind of marginalization, exploitation, or violence; to those setting out in the world of work; and to those who show signs of a specific Vocation.
3. They foster and defend the value of family – the foundational nucleus of society and of the Church – and are committed to construct it as “a domestic Church”. Married Salesian Cooperators live their mission through their marriage as “cooperators with the love of God the Creator” and as “the primary and principal educators of their children,” according to the pedagogy of goodness proper to the Preventive System.
4. They are attentive to the Social Justice Doctrines of the Church and to social communications so as to foster educational journeys to grow in these areas.
5. They support the Church's missionary activity and commit themselves to educate to a global perspective as an opening to dialogue among cultures.

*Reference: Mark 9: 50; Luke 14: 34-35*

### **Salt and Light**

“You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its taste, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless; so it is thrown away and people walk on it.

“You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. Nobody lights a lamp to put it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lamp-stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and give praise to your Father in heaven.”

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem, 18 November, 1965*

### **Group Apostolate**

The faithful are called as individuals to exercise an apostolate in the various conditions of their life. They must, however, remember that man is social by nature and that it has been God's pleasure to assemble those who believe in Christ and make of them the People of God. (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5-10), a single body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12). The group apostolate is in happy harmony therefore with a fundamental need in the faithful, a need that is both human and Christian. At the same time it offers a sign of the communion and unity of the Church in Christ, who said: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them”. (Mt 18:20).

For that reason Christians will exercise their apostolate in a spirit of concord. They will be apostles both in their families and in the parishes and dioceses, which already are themselves expressions of the community character of the apostolate; apostles too in the free associations they will have decided to form among themselves.

### **Various Types of Group Apostolate**

Great variety is to be found in apostolic associations. Some look to the general apostolic end of the Church; others aim specifically at evangelization and sanctification; others work for the permeation of the temporal order by the Christian spirit; and others engage in works of mercy and of charity as their special way of being witness to Christ.

First among these associations to be given consideration should be those which favor and promote a more intimate unity between the faith of the members and their everyday life. Associations are not ends in themselves; they are meant to be of service to the Church's mission to the world. Their apostolic value depends on their conformity with the Church's aim, as well as on the Christian witness and evangelical spirit of each of their members and of the association as a whole.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 12*

### **Structures and Ways in Which They Work**

1. Salesian Cooperators participate in the mission of the Association in the Church and reinforce it with their own commitments and by involving other persons.
2. Normally, the activities of Salesian Cooperators take place, in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation, in structures where secular circumstances offer them greater possibilities of meaningful involvement: civic, cultural, socio-economic, political, ecclesial, and Salesian.
3. Salesian Cooperators can carry out their apostolic commitment in works run autonomously by the Association and in initiatives which respond to the most pressing needs of their locality.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 1, Article 5*

### **Works Run Directly by the Association or by Members of the Association**

1. Salesian Cooperators can live out their apostolic commitment in works run either directly by the Association or by its members. Such works must express the Salesian spirit and charism, in both their characteristics and goals, according to what is defined in the respective statutes.
2. The responsibility for running the work will rest directly with the Local Center if it is a work promoted by the Associations, or with those members who have undertaken its administration, without involving, in such a case, any responsibility on the part of the higher levels of the same Association.

The Association can take steps necessary to be recognized as a civic nonprofit organization in those places in which they consider it opportune.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 124-126.*



## ***Lesson 11 – Apostolic Commitment (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand how the Salesian lifestyle is marked by the spirit of the Beatitudes.
2. To understand what sort of witness the Cooperator should have.
3. To relate more closely with Christ in his preference for his “little ones” and his poor.
4. To realize the call of the Salesian Cooperator to evangelize the world around him.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

### **The Following of Christ in a Salesian Way According to His Beatitudes**

A second way opens up for the Salesian who is in earnest about his vocation. Being an apostle of Christ does not mean he is dispensed from being a disciple of Christ: *quite the contrary*. The Salesian Cooperator desires to bring the Gospel to others: he himself must be the first to know and live this same Gospel. In fact *he will carry the Gospel to others far more effectively by the way he lives than by the way he speaks*.

### **The Beatitudes**

It is the Salesian’s duty to be among those on the mountain-side listening to Jesus preaching his Beatitudes. Both the spirit and the mission of our family are in deep accord with them and impel us to practice the *evangelical virtues* they present:

- *Poverty in spirit and heart*: to help us be detached from ourselves and our smugness and attached to the young and poor.
- *Meekness* and simplicity in our speech, in our way of treating others, in the patience our Salesian method requires of us.
- *Ill-treatment* serenely accepted in the face of difficulties; and sympathy for others who are afflicted in any way; especially the young.
- *Hunger and thirst for justice*, i.e., for God’s glory and for the just happiness of our neighbour, especially those who are deprived of justice and happiness.
- *Mercy*: With our hearts ever open to material and moral misery, and ready to pour thereon the healing oil of our understanding and brotherly help.
- *Purity* in thought, word and deed, avoiding all that could scandalize; but especially bringing to our homes a way of life that is above reproach, welcoming and serene.
- *Peace that we energetically strive* for in a world agitated by violence and class hatred.
- Determination to *stand four-square* by those who are persecuted in their efforts to achieve the Kingdom of God, of Justice, of Brotherhood, that Kingdom where God’s children are not exploited.

All these virtues make us avoid what is contrary to the Gospel or in any way anti-Salesian: smugness, pride, harshness, and intrigue. They encourage us to be “meek and lowly in heart” like Jesus (Mt. XI, 29) and “merciful even as our Father is merciful” (cf. Lk. VI, 36), and to imitate Christ according to the inspiration given us by our patron, St. Francis of Sales who was so steeped in the Gospels.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 7*

### **The Witness of the Beatitudes**

The lifestyle of a Salesian Cooperators, marked by the spirit of the Beatitudes, commits him or her to the evangelization of culture and of social life. For this reason the Cooperator, being rooted in Christ and aware that all baptized people are called to the perfection of love, lives and gives witness to:

- A life lived according to the Spirit, as the source of joy, peace, and forgiveness,
- Freedom, in obedience to God's plan, appreciating the value and autonomy proper to secular realities, committing themselves to direct these, above all, to the service of persons,
- Gospel poverty, administering the goods entrusted to them using the criteria of temperance and of sharing, in view of the common good,
- A sexuality according to a Gospel vision of chastity, marked by delicacy and a joyful married or celibate life, lived with integrity and based on love,
- That mercy which opens one's heart to all material and moral miseries and urges one to work with pastoral charity,
- Justice to build a more fraternal world that recognizes and promotes the rights of all, especially of the weakest,
- A firm will to be a builder of peace in a world agitated by violence and class hatred.

This way of love for God and for others is a sure path towards sanctity.

*Reference: Matthew 5: 1-12*

Seeing the crowds he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

How happy are the poor in spirit;  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Happy *the gentle*;  
*they shall have the earth for their heritage.*  
Happy those who mourn;  
they shall be comforted.  
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right;  
they shall be satisfied.  
Happy the merciful;  
they shall have mercy shown them.  
Happy the pure in heart;  
they shall see God.  
Happy are the peacemakers;  
they shall be called sons of God.  
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of righteousness;  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem, Chapter 11*

The mission of the Church pertains to the salvation of men, which is to be achieved by belief in Christ and by His grace. The apostolate of the Church and of all its members is primarily designed to manifest Christ's message by words and deeds and to communicate His grace to the world. This is done mainly through the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, entrusted in a special way to the clergy, wherein the laity also have their very important roles to fulfill if they are to be "fellow workers for the truth" (3 Jn 8). It is especially on this level that the apostolate of the laity and the pastoral ministry are mutually complementary.

There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very testimony of their Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have the power to draw men to belief and to God; for the Lord says, “Even so let your light shine before men in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 5.16).

However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one’s way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life. “For the charity of Christ impels us” (2 Cor. 5.14). The words of the Apostle should echo in all hearts, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor.9.16). (1)

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 126-128.*



## ***Lesson 12 – Cooperator Mission (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand how the same field of action is open to the Cooperators as is the other members of the Congregation.
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 S.D.B.*

“The field of action is the same for the Cooperators as for the Congregation of St. Francis of 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” (SGC, Doc. 1 no 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 goodwill and our dedicated interest and help” (Pope Paul VI to “Angelus” 31-1-71).

The first article of the Salesian Congregation’s Constitution 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 within the service of the complete Church mission, the Salesians (both Religious and Cooperators) have a “specific mission”. The word mission is rich in meaning; above all it implies that apostolic work is not assigned by man and hence within this autonomy and having his individual tastes; it is God-given: man is “sent” to work in God’s vineyard. Hence it comprises the following elements:

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

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

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 22*

### **Co-responsibility for 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 meeting for programming and evaluating the various activities and in choosing those who will undertake specific responsibilities. If called to take on particular

responsibilities, he or she commits him or herself to carry them out with fidelity and in spirit of service.

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: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici*

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” (24), 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” (Lk 7:16), and in the spirit are 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” (25) 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 everyday 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”. (26)

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. Mt 25:40).

*Reference: New Jerusalem Bible, Mark 6: 7-13*

### **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 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 128-129.*



## ***Lesson 13 – Cooperator Mission (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand that as a Salesian Cooperator you will be sent as a servant and an instrument of God.
2. To know to whom the Salesian Cooperator is to be sent in the Salesian mission.
3. To come to know how in our modern world how the youth problem is widespread and urgent.
4. To come to know what is the first priority in the Salesian mission.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

God gave Don Bosco a heart” as wide as the sea shore”; no matter whom he met, he always tried to do them good – men or women, rich or poor, young or old, important or insignificant. Yet all his life shows clearly that he considered himself sent by God directly to three categories of people. The first of these was more important than the other two and in a sense gave rise to them: youth, the working classes and pagans.

The first priority to which Don Bosco was sent: Mission to the young – Two points need clarification regarding the age and social condition of the young. Don Bosco did not exclude children but he considered his mission to be directed more particularly to the teenagers. Two deep convictions guided his actions: youth was the age when decisions were made which affected the whole life of the person and the future of society; hence anything that endangered the harmonious development of the young was a serious matter; anything that saved it or helped it was important. It was this very urgency and vastness of the matter that made him insist with his cooperators: “We must be united in these difficult times....to remove or at least lessen the evils that endanger the good moral of youth, in whose hands lies the future of civil society”. The Salesian Congregation is the bond that holds the Cooperators united; its primary aim is to work for the good of the young; the future is in their hands for good or for ill...From all these places (Italy, Europe, China, America) come daily requests for priests to go and undertake the care of youth in moral danger...It is for these great needs that we seek the help of the Cooperators.

Today Don Bosco’s reaction would be even greater; he would make his appeal to the Cooperators even more vigorous and entreating.

And now a further appeal: within the first priority is a super-priority --- “poor and abandoned” youth. These terms need clarification, since there are various kinds of poverty: economic, social and cultural; and emotional, religious and moral. The former refers to cases of material poverty, social insecurity and helplessness and a culture that is very low level. This level of living impedes the development of individual capacities and the ability of self-expression in accordance with human dignity. The other kind of poverty has to do with the disintegration of family life. In practice this second kind of poverty takes on different traits depending on the diverse and changing conditions of times and places.

We arrive now at finding the true priority of Salesian activity. Don Bosco did not exclude youth of affluent families who were religiously and morally poor; but his preference was always for the victims of economic, social and cultural poverty.

It should be added that Don Bosco was always interested in the young (and not so young), whether rich or poor, who showed signs and dispositions of a vocation to the priesthood or Religious life. This too is one of the explicit aims of the activity of the Salesian family

*Reference: P. Rinaldi – Man with a Dream*

Don Bosco's Dream – A dream I had when I was nine years old left an indelible impression on my mind. I dreamt I was in a large field, not far from home, with a crowd of boys, most of whom were playing, while some were at their worst behavior, as was evidenced by their foul language. I went right up to them and began to rough them up with blows and harsh words, when suddenly a man appeared, clad in a dazzling white robe, his bearing noble and majestic, his face so bright, I could hardly bear to look at him. He called me by name and told me to take charge of those boys, adding "You will never make them your friends by treating them that way. Be kind and gentle with them. Come now, show them how they can mend their ways and become decent boys."

I was so awed and frightened that all I could do was stammer something about being a poor ignorant boy, quite unable to lecture anyone, let alone those boys. I noticed, in the meantime, that they all had left their games and had quietly gathered around the mysterious man. I then spoke to him again; and, not quite knowing what I was saying, I ventured to say to him, "Who are you to tell me to do such impossible things?" "What seems impossible to you now," he answered, "you will be able to do later through obedience and study." "But how can I ever hope to be able to study and learn about those things?" "I will give you a guide, who can instruct you as no one else can." "But who are you to speak to me that way?" "You know my mother. You greet her three times a day... the way your mother taught you." "My mother always tells me not to have anything to do with strangers, unless I ask her permission. Tell me your name."

Suddenly I saw a stately lady at his side, wearing a beautiful mantle, all studded with gems that shone like stars. Seeing how hopelessly confused I was, she bade me come close to her, and taking my hand, "Look," she said. The boys had all vanished, and in their place were now all sorts of animals: goats, dogs, wild cats, bears..." This will be your field of action," the lady continued, "but first you must grow up to be humble, strong and sturdy. The change you will see in these animals, you will then bring about in my children."

I looked again, and all those wild beasts were suddenly changing into lambs, bleating and playfully skipping all around us. It was all too much for me, and I started to cry while I kept begging the lady to tell me what all this meant. She gently placed her hand on my head, "Someday, in due time," she said, smiling, "you will understand everything." It was at this point that I awoke and realized that it was all a dream.

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

### **The Founder: A Man Sent by God**

To contribute to the salvation of youth, "the most delicate and most precious portion of human society", the Holy Spirit, through the maternal intervention of Mary, raised up St. John Bosco who founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales (1859) and, with Saint Mary Dominica Mazzarello, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872). He extended the apostolic energy of the Salesian charism by officially setting up the "Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators", the third branch of the Family (1876), united to the Society of St. Francis de Sales (also called the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco or the Salesian Congregation).

The Holy Spirit formed the heart of a father and teacher in St. John Bosco, one capable of total dedication, inspiring him with an educational method permeated by the charity of the Good Shepherd.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 129-130.*



## ***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 S.D.B.*

Other priorities of the Salesian mission – 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 towards people of poor and humble circumstances.

Another priority of the Salesian 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 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 S.D.B.*

The Service the Salesian Mission wishes to render is development of the whole man. The mission 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: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici*

### **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: and 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: New 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 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 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.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 130-132.*



## ***Lesson 15 – Cooperator in the Church***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the many gifts God provides the Church.
2. To see how many different gifts contribute to the building up of the Salesian family.
3. To see the place of the Salesian Cooperator within the Church as expressed in the parish and diocese.
4. To understand how the Salesian Cooperators participate in the Salesian mission with their involvement in the Church.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

“The Cooperators main aim, under the general supervision of the Salesians, is to help with their good works the Church, the bishops and the parish priests”, (Don Bosco, 1884, MB XVII, 25)

“The Salesian Cooperators form a very efficient auxiliary of Catholic Action. You are deeply imbued with the Salesian spirit. You understand well what close ties you have with the many works which are supported by the Catholic laity in their close collaboration with the hierarch...and what reliance we are able to place on your cooperation” (Pius XII to the Cooperators, 12 September, 1952)

“We Salesian Cooperators (we would prefer to say Salesians who are Cooperators’) want this message to reaffirm our renewed conviction that today’s social needs require our dedicated work in the Church. Not only our Baptism calls for this, but also our membership of a Union founded by Don Bosco for the very purpose of serving the local Church and the Pope”. (Message of the Cooperators to the SGC, 2 July, 1971).

The Salesian family was born charismatically of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul teaches very clearly that charisms or special spiritual talents are always the gift of the Holy Spirit alone to individuals or to groups “for the common good”, to increase the vitality of the whole body, the Church. This is exactly how Don Bosco, “man of the Church” par excellence, always understood it.

This awareness or involvement in the Church is one of the characteristic traits of the Salesian spirit. We take the word “Church” in its full meaning, including the People of God (of whom we are members and whom we wish to serve) and the hierarchy (to whom we offer our respectful obedience and generous collaboration).

The new SDB Constitutions say, “We have to see the Church as the unifying and animating centre of all the forces which work for salvation. For the Pope we have a special reverence and loyalty, towards bishops charity and obedience and for all other Religious families deep esteem. We desire to collaborate at all times so that the Body of Christ may grow. “All labour becomes negligible where the Church and the Papacy are concerned.” (Don Bosco)” (Const. SDB, 44)

This is exactly how Don Bosco conceived and founded his Cooperators. Perhaps the fact that he was unable to make them canonically one with the Congregation allowed him greater scope and freedom in planning their direct service to the local Church.

It took the clarion call of Pius XII to open up the “vast horizons” again. “Dear children in Christ, you are well aware that your Pious Union, engrafted as part of the prolific parent stock of St. John Bosco’s Religious family, helping in its many activities and sharing its spiritual riches, does not have, however, as its immediate aim the aid of the Congregation whose name it bears; but rather, as your holy Founder declared, “ to help, under the general supervision of the Salesians, the Church, the bishops, and the parish priests”. You are deeply imbued with the Salesian spirit.

It is obvious then that whatever work the Cooperators are involved in (whatever the field of work of the Salesian Congregation or outside that area) they are always in the service of the Church.

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

### **The Salesian Cooperators in the Church**

1. The Salesian Cooperators integrate themselves in both the parish and the diocese with availability and in an attitude of service in the Salesian style. Called to a ministry by the Church, they carry it out as a means of support and development of the ecclesial pastoral.

They live their Baptismal vocation by taking on Don Bosco's Preventive System as the specific modality in which to express God's love, taking particular care of the young and of families.

2. The Salesian Cooperators promote heartfelt acceptance of and adherence to the Magisterium of the Church. Their relationships with their parish priests, with other priests, with Religious, and with other laity are marked by esteem, solidarity, and active participation in pastoral plans, especially in those which focus on the young, families, and vocations.

*Reference: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11*

### **Gifts from the Holy Spirit**

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served. There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to everyone for all services. Each one is given some proof of the Spirit's presence for the good of all. The Spirit gives one man a message of wisdom, while to another man the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. One and the same Spirit gives faith to one man, while to another man he gives the power to heal. The spirit gives one man the power to work miracles; to another, the gift of speaking God's message; and to yet another, the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not. To one man he gives the ability to speak with strange sounds; to another, he gives the ability to explain what those sounds mean. But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; he gives a different gift to each man, as he wishes.

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

### **The Association in the Church**

1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is approved by the Apostolic See as a public Association of the Faithful and shares in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

The members actively collaborate in its mission, in the name of the Church, under the authority of the Rector Major as Don Bosco's Successor, in a spirit of fidelity to its Pastors and in collaboration with other ecclesial forces.

2. Salesian Cooperators manifest a filial devotion to the Supreme Pontiff.
3. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is recognized as a public ecclesiastical judicial person. It has its headquarters in Rome.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 133-135.*



## ***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: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici*

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”(1Cor 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”.

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 the family has in the development of society and the Church herself.

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 S.D.B.*

Since the Cooperators do not live “in community”, belong 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 Religious Salesians 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; 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 1600 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*

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

“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

*Reference: Matthew 28: 16-20*

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

Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.

*Reference: Vatican II, Christifideles Laici*

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 unto 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, updated 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 to 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 135-137.*



## ***Lesson 17 – The Preventive System (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand how Christian charity is the basis for the Preventive System.
2. To understand the techniques used by Don Bosco in the Preventive System.
3. To recognize how the Preventive System (Salesian Spirituality) is the basis for a relationship with God.
4. To understand how Jesus the Good Shepherd in Don Bosco's first dream relates to the Preventive System.

*Reference: Reason, Religion and Kindness – The Educational Method of Saint John Bosco – Paul Avallone S.D.B.*

### **Vision of 1824**

It will be profitable to prelude this chapter with a brief narration of a vision (Don Bosco called it a dream) that occurred when the Saint was nine years of age. His future work was prefigured in the vision, as well as the spirit that was to permeate the atmosphere of his apostolate. At the command of Pius IX Don Bosco gave us the following account: "At the age of about nine years I had a dream which remained deeply impressed upon my mind for the rest of my life. In the dream I seemed to be near a house in a large courtyard, where a crowd of boys was gathered together. Some were laughing, others playing, and many among them blaspheming. On hearing these blasphemies, I immediately rushed into their midst, raising my voice and using my fists to make them keep quiet."

"At that moment a dignified looking man, nobly clad, who seemed to be in the prime of life appeared on the scene. A white mantle covered the whole of his person, but his face was so radiant that I was unable to look at it for long. He called me by name, and directed me to place myself at the head of these boys, concluding with these words: "You must win the hearts of these friends of yours, not with your fists, but with sweetness and charity. Set to work at once to instruct them on the wickedness of sin and on the excellence of virtue."

The vision continued. The grand personage was our Lord. Later our Lady appeared on the scene, and it was she who was to make possible what John was now seeing. Our Lady spoke thus: "This is your field of labor. This is where you must work. Make yourself humble, determined and strong. You must do for my sons what you will now see happening to these animals."

"I looked again, and to my surprise, instead of fierce animals, I saw gentle lambs, all frisking about and bleating merrily, as if to do honor to the man and the lady.

"At this point of the dream I commenced to cry and begged the lady to speak clearly because I did not know what all these things meant. She then put her hand on my head and said: "In good time, my son, you will understand everything."

The condition for conquering the hearts of the young was to be sweetness and charity, as the vision pointedly indicated. This spirit was to reign in all Salesian schools if the work of education was to be successful. Don Bosco's spirit of kindness, amiability and understanding stemmed from this vision. This explains why Don Bosco reluctantly touches upon the subject of punishments. In treating this subject he begins thus: "If possible, never make use of punishments." Charity must be the mainspring of action; Don Bosco never tired of repeating this.

## **Preventive Techniques**

The ancient adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” finds its application with Don Bosco’s system of education. In this system, prevention of wrongdoing is of paramount importance if punishment is to be ruled out. Some of these preventive techniques presented by Don Bosco will be briefly indicated:

1. Make known the rules and regulations of the school:

These are to be few and precise. The rules and regulations are to be read to all pupils at the beginning of the year. Once a week some few articles are to be explained in detail by a member of the faculty. This procedure also forms part of the general guidance program.

2. Supervise the students constantly:

Supervision is the key word of the system. This is no question of a police-like vigilance, but of a brotherly and fatherly watchfulness. “Care should be taken that the pupils never remain alone. As far as possible, the assistants out to go beforehand to the place where the boys are to gather together; they should remain with them until others come to relieve them, and the pupils should never be left un-occupied.”

3. Strive to be loved by the pupils:

The teacher must endeavor to have the pupils realize they are loved. “The educator must strive to make himself loved by his pupils if he wishes to make himself feared by them. Every Salesian must make himself loved if he wishes to be feared. He will attain this end if he makes it clear by his words, and still more by his actions, that all his care and solicitude are directed towards the spiritual and temporal welfare of his pupils.”

4. Withdraw affection and attention:

This negative or psychological punishment is very effective when one had gained the love and esteem of his pupils. “...The omission of some token of kindness is a punishment which rekindles emulation, revives courage and never degrades.

5. Correct patiently:

Three points are especially recommended by Don Bosco. An educator should correct: a) with the patience of a father; b) as far as possible in private-only in cases of preventing or remedying serious scandal would the Saint permit public correction; c) at the right moment, that is, give the pupil time to reflect, to enter himself; he will realize he is wrong.

6. Be master of yourself:

Don Bosco says: “First of all, master your own character, and then you will succeed in mastering those of your pupils. Show them that uncontrolled emotion plays no part in your actions; they will respect you for that and their respect will prompt obedience.

7. Make use of a third party:

One’s efforts may be unavailing and unsuccessful. There may be a teacher in the house who has gained the confidence of the lad. This teacher should be invited to attempt to win over the lad and brought to see his error.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 9*

**The Task of Christian Education**

1. Salesian Cooperators, like Don Bosco, bring the task of educating and evangelizing everywhere, in order to form “honest citizens, good Christians, and blessed inhabitants of Heaven,” who know that they are always on the journey to a greater human and Christian maturity.
2. They share with the young their enthusiasm for living with authenticity the values of truth, freedom, justice, the sense of the common good, and of service.
3. They educate the young to encounter the Risen Christ – in our Faith and in the Sacraments – so they may find Him the meaning of their life so as to grow as “new men and new women.”
4. They are committed to helping the young develop a life plan which will give witness to their Christian and Salesian presence in the Church and in society.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 137-138.*



## ***Lesson 18 – The Preventive System (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To see how Don Bosco used Reason, Religion and Kindness with his boys.
2. To reflect on how the Cooperator can put Reason, Religion and Kindness into practice in daily life, family, work situations and the apostolate.
3. To understand Don Bosco's adage "It is not enough to love the boys. They must know they are loved".
4. To reflect on how the Preventive system can be used with today's youth.

*Reference: Reason, Religion and Kindness – The Educational Method of St. John Bosco – Paul Avallone S.D.B.*

### **Fundamental Principles of this System**

In the words of St. John Bosco himself, "...this system is based entirely on reason, religion and kindness." He insisted that reason and religion are to be practiced first by every teacher and then made an integral part of one's educational effort if the teacher wishes to be obeyed and to be successful.

The first element in the Salesian educational system is *reason*: the power to comprehend and understand the young and at the same time the ability to dialogue and communicate with them. This calls for an active and constant presence of the educator with the educand; a pleasant unrestrained "being together." Efforts are made to supply the legitimate emotional and psychological needs of the young, who seek "to belong," "to be secure" and "to be recognized".

Belongingness, security, and recognition are attained in this system of education by the confidence generated through interpersonal relationships between pupils and teachers who, in Don Bosco's words, are like "loving fathers" encouraging and praising at the proper moment. The needs for attention and recognition are fulfilled by wholesome outlets; sports, music, dramatics, field trips, and countless number of school activities.

The second element in the Salesian educational system is *religion*: The message of the Gospel is an integral part of Salesian education, since the "good news" is light that will lead individuals safely through life in this world to the life in the next.

The means of saving the young is and ever will be religion, which will dominate the actions of the young and effect permanent change for the good of the "individual and that of society." Salesian education, drawing always from authentic Catholic tradition, places great importance on the frequent use of the Sacraments – the ordinary channels of God's grace and help; indeed, the young need such help in the period of adolescence, a perplexing and confusing time of life.

The third element in the Salesian educational system is *kindness*: This basic principle is not a weakness, but rather a show of strength and self-control. It seeks to create a persuasive atmosphere, where self expression is fostered. This kindness or charity generates that expansiveness and confidence so much needed by today's youth.

The Preventive System stems from the Gospel of Christ, who is meekness, kindness, and love. This method is based on the golden words of St. Paul when he extols the great virtue of charity: "Charity is patient, is kind. It bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 2, Article 10*

### **The Pedagogy of Goodness**

In their educational task, Salesian Cooperators:

1. Put into practice Don Bosco’s “Preventive System,” a spiritual and educative experience which is based on reason, religion, and loving-kindness,
2. Foster a family environment in which constant dialogue, an animating presence, personal accompaniment, and group experience help all perceive God’s presence,
3. Promote the good and educate to a love for life, to responsibility, solidarity, sharing, synergy, and communion,
4. Appeal to a person’s inner resources and believe in the invisible action of grace. They look at each young person with realistic optimism, convinced of the educational value of the faith experience. Their relationship with the young is inspired by a mature and welcoming love.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 3, Article 18*

### **Style of Relationship**

Salesian Cooperators live as “good Christians and honest citizens,” sanctifying their existence in everyday life and rooting their action in union with God. They believe in the value of life, of giving freely without seeking return, of fraternity, and of “being neighbor.” They cultivate those attitudes which foster education to the joys of daily life and they communicate this to others.

*Reference: 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7*

### **The Order of Importance in Spiritual Gifts, Love**

If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever.

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 138-140.*



## ***Lesson 19 – Organization of the Association (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

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

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

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.”

*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 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 Christian Confession, or of a different religion, and/ or culture, who feel an affinity with the Salesian charism, 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 Secretary (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*

### **Letter of the Apostles**

Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barnabas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them “The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number (who went out) without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and have disturbed their peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth. It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.”

### **Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 140-142.*



## ***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 the Organization is supported by the Cooperators materially and by assuming positions of leadership.
4. To understand the ways you can help further the Organization of the Association.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

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).

He 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 the Salesian Rectors 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”. 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 2, 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 obligation 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 5, 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 Cooperators 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 5, Article 21*

### **Tasks of the Local Council as Pertain 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:
  - a. To plan, promote and coordinate the formation and apostolic initiatives of its members,
  - b. 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,
  - c. Strengthen the charismatic ties and bonds of communion with the Provincial Council or the World Council of the Association exists,
  - d. Decide on the convocation of Assemblies,
  - e. See to the administration of the goods of the Association,
  - f. Approve the Budget and the Balance to present to the members,
  - g. Accompany the Aspirants in their participation in the Center and give them a quality formation, taking into account the formation guidelines of the Association, valuing their differences and directing them constructively towards the gift of unity,
  - h. 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,
  - i. Make known and spread Don Bosco's spirituality (for example, by means of the Mamma Margaret workshops, the "Bosco Homes", and other similar initiatives),
  - j. Propose the Vocation of the Salesian Cooperator, planning possible initiatives to welcome Aspirants,
  - k. 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. A Coordinator
  - b. A Treasurer

c. 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 5, Article 22*

**Delegates**

1. The SDB and FMA 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 Centre is not established in connection with a Salesian work of the SDB or the FMA, 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*

**Delegates at Antioch**

And so they were sent on their journey. Upon their arrival in Antioch they called the assembly together and delivered the letter. When the people read it, they were delighted with the exhortation. Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted and strengthened the brothers with many words. After they had spent some time there, they were sent off with greetings of peace from the brothers to those who had commissioned them. But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and proclaiming with many others the word of the Lord.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 24*

**The Ministry of the Rector Major**

1. The Rector Major of the Society of St. Francis de Sales is Don Bosco's successor. Through the explicit will of the Founder he is the Superior of the Association and carries out the functions of Supreme Moderator within it. He guarantees its fidelity to the Founders 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 SEM0), 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 towards the Rector Major and of fidelity to his guidelines.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 6, Article 39*

### **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 Law. The good owned by the Association as such are ecclesiastical goods.<sup>43</sup>
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 Local and Provincial Council's the permissions needed to establish acts of extraordinary administration and alienation which do not require the intervention of the Apostolic See. <sup>44</sup>
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 142-144.*



## ***Lesson 21 – Membership & Formation (Session 1)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand that every Cooperator is responsible for his own formation by his willing acceptance of help that is offered him.
2. To understand that as a Salesian Cooperator apostolic formation is necessary.
3. To understand in what this formation consists (i.e. spiritual, doctrinal and practical).
4. To understand that the success of the apostolate depends on our living union with Christ.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

“The Apostolate can attain maximum effectiveness only through a diversified and thorough formation” (AA 28)

“In keeping with their purpose and according to their measure, lay groups and associations dedicated to the apostolate or to other supernatural goals should carefully and persistently promote formation for the apostolate. Frequently these groups are the ordinary vehicle of harmonious formation for the apostolate since they provide doctrinal, spiritual and practical formation”.

The vocation to be a Salesian Cooperator has a special identity of its own; it is rich in content; it is rugged. One should not imagine that it is possible to be a ready made Salesian Cooperator all at once, without preparation and continuous effort. A formation in two stages is required: a) the –“initiation”- for the acquiring of knowledge and basic capacities; and b) the –“on-going” stage – for acquiring perseverance (since it helps overcome the insufficiencies, weaknesses, fatigues, and at the same time responds to the ever-changing needs of persons and places in a world and a Church that are rapidly evolving).

Your Salesian formation whether spiritual or apostolic must be the first of our pastoral tasks. In this way we feel that we are complying with your desire, namely to make an authoritative invitation to the Salesian priests so that in their capacity as preachers and spiritual directors, they make themselves available for the formation and spiritual direction of the Cooperators. (SGC, 735)

Don Bosco himself, in ways that were very flexible, took great care in the training of his young Religious. As far as the Cooperators were concerned, he first introduced them to a more earnest spiritual life “in order to persevere in the tasks they had begun according to the aim of the Association”. It is noteworthy that in the famous chapter on the “extern members” he requests that “the member make at least a simple promise to the Rector to dedicate himself to those things he judges to be conducive to the greater glory of God” (MB 885).

Every Cooperator docile to the Holy Spirit is plainly responsible for his own formation. He will achieve this by the way he elects to live, work and study, and by his willing acceptance of help that is offered him. It is up to him to choose the kind of work for which he feels he is best suited, taking into account his personal talents, his social and professional position, his particular tastes.

But as far as Don Bosco was concerned the best training was given by the community. Every Cooperator should try to be in contact with Salesian communities, to see, to hear, be edified, learn...and to make every possible effort to become a member of a group that is actively engaged: example attracts, friendship encourages, experience with others enriches.

The spiritual formation should be deemed the basis and condition for every successful apostolate. It is evident that “the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity’s living union with Christ...in the ordinary conditions of life. Only an intense love of God our Father and his Kingdom and an intense love for our “brothers to be saved” can lead us to “a dedication” to co-responsibility in the Salesian mission.

In addition to spiritual formation there is needed solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics and philosophy, instruction adjusted to differences of age and natural talents.

All must study Don Bosco, his life, his work and his spirit.

All must be well informed regarding the problems of youth today, so as to better understand the young and come up with the best solutions. It has been said that every Cooperator should become a “youth expert”.

Finally, “since formation for the apostolate cannot consist in merely theoretical instruction, from the very beginning of formation the laity should gradually and prudently learn how to view, judge and do all things in the light of faith as well as to develop and improve themselves and others through action”. Don Bosco was always distrustful of formation that was over theoretical: “Practice makes perfect”: experimentation, sifting the results, making a fresh start... with the help of others with more experience in the apostolate: they should “meet in small groups with their associates and friends, examine the methods and results of their apostolic activity and measure their daily way of life against the Gospel”.

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem – Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity’s living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord’s words, “He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15.5).

This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy. These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God’s will they grow in that union.

*Reference: PVA Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 29*

### **Responsibilities and Initiatives as Regards Formation**

1. Salesian Cooperators are the first ones responsible for their own human, Christian, Salesian and professional formation.
2. The Association promotes and supports personal and group formation through the action of qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, and other members of the Salesian Family.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 4, Article 13*

### **Entrance into the Association**

1. The person who desires to enter into the Association matures his own choice freely and responsibly, by means of some fundamental steps; meeting with the group of Salesian Cooperators of the Local Center, sharing in their path of formation and participating in the initiatives promoted by it; sharing its spirit and mission, sustained by a progressive understanding, growth, and verification of his/her personal motivations.
2. The person who desires to enter into the Association is welcomed by those in charge of the Local Center. He or She agrees with the one who is responsible for formation (the Delegate and/or the

Formator) on a program adapted to his/her path of discernment and begins, as an Aspirant, this path of formation.

3. After completing the process of formation in the Local Center, the Aspirant presents his/her written request to take part in the Association.
4. The Local Council passes the request of the Aspirant on to the Provincial Council, accompanied by its own evaluation based upon the Aspirant's knowledge of the charism of Don Bosco and of the contents of the PVA, the *Project of Apostolic Life*. The Provincial Council, on the basis of such evaluation, proceeds to the approval of the request.
5. Entrance into the Association happens when the personal apostolic *Promise* is made. This apostolic *Promise* is a spiritual and ecclesial commitment which the Aspirant takes on through a free and knowledgeable choice. By means of it, he/she responds to the gift of the Lord and to his or her call to live this personal vocation according to the Salesian charism.
6. The apostolic *Promise* is ordinarily made in the Local Center in the way indicated by the person himself and in keeping with the diverse contexts.
7. In particular situations, where no juridically-established Local Center exists, one of the World Delegates will, in understanding with the Rector Major, give directions regarding the path of formation. This directive is also valid for those persons who, because of logistical difficulties (of place or of time), are unable to be directed to the Local Center.
8. The apostolic *Promise* may be received by the Rector Major, by the World Coordinator, or by someone delegated.

*Reference: PVA Regulations, Chapter 4, Article 16*

### **On-going Formation Initiatives**

1. Conscious of the importance of on-going formation, the Salesian Cooperators:
  - Develop their own human gifts, so that they might ever better their family, professional and civic responsibilities,
  - Mature in their faith and in charity, growing in union with God to render their life more Gospel-like and more Salesian,
  - Dedicate time to reflection and study, to deepen Sacred Scriptures, the Doctrines of the Church, their knowledge of Don Bosco, and Salesian documents,
  - Qualify themselves for the apostolate and service to which they have been called.
2. The following initiatives are:
  - periodic meetings, ordinarily held monthly, carried out according to the demands of life and apostolate of the members of the Centre and other forms of encounters, possibly open to the territory and to the civic society,
  - Intense moments of prayer and discernment,
  - Contacts with Groups of the Salesian Family at all levels,
  - Deepening of the documents of the Rector Major and the publications of the Salesian Family, giving preferential attention to the *Salesian Bulletin*
3. Meetings and planning or verification initiatives which the association promotes at various levels have great importance in the formative plan. Proposals of specific themes with other Groups of the

Salesian Family are to be favored. Participation in such initiatives must be adequately prepared, and their fruits are to be shared with all the members of the Center.

Participation in such initiatives, promoted at higher levels in the Association, by those responsible and/or by representatives of Local Centres, should be properly prepared, and the fruits thereof shared with members of the Centre.

4. The Association is commits itself to utilize the many means of social communications and new technologies to collaborate in cultural dialogue, to foster the development of their critical capacity and to elaborate and spread formative publications accessible in various ways to all..

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 144-146.*



## ***Lesson 22 – Membership & Formation (Session 2)***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand the spiritual sources that should be used in the formation of Salesian Cooperators.
2. To understand the formation process accompanies the Cooperator throughout his lifetime.
3. To understand how participation in the life of the Centre form an integral part of initial formation.
4. To know that Salesian Cooperators may be asked to offer their resources and abilities in the service of animation and responsibility.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

The last chapter of the 1876 Regulations shows Don Bosco’s concern that the Cooperators receive moderate, balanced and regular spiritual nourishment. Each day an Our Father and Hail Mary for the Holy Father’s intentions. Each month the “Exercise for a Happy Death” with the same requirements as the Religious Salesians: Confession, Communion, “as if it were in reality the last day of their lives”. This practice was for him a serious and important matter, a kind of key to the spiritual life. Finally, each year he advised (without obligation) “at least a few days of spiritual Retreat. Apart from these three spiritual activities, Don Bosco recommended to his Cooperators “to approach the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion more often than is ordinarily prescribed”. This close involvement in the Sacramental life is one of the characteristics of Salesian piety.

Spiritual sources we should consider:

1. “The two-fold table of Sacred Scripture and the Holy Eucharist”

“Of all spiritual helps, those acts are outstanding by which the faithful receive nourishment from God’s Word at the two fold table of Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist”. For the Children of the Church the Word of God is “the support and energy of the Church, the strength of the faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life”; hence meditation on the Word of God is explicitly recommended to lay apostles. A Cooperator must therefore become familiar with Holy Writ, especially the Gospels; the Sunday Liturgy of Word should be a real meditation and should colour his whole week following.

Then there is Mass and Communion. “This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished particularly by active participation in the Sacred Liturgy”. “The blessed Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth, that is, Christ himself, our Passover and living bread. Through his very flesh, made vital and vitalizing by the Holy Spirit, he offers life to men.

2. “Sacrament of Confession”

Sacrament of Confession – the pardon of sins committed, full reconciliation with God and his Church, and also (perhaps mainly) “the turning of the heart towards the love of the Father of mercies”, that is, ardent enthusiasm to love more and more.

3. “The two devotions: Mary and Don Bosco

“The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life (in the lay Christian) is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles. While leading on earth a life common to all men, one filled with family concerns and labours, she was always intimately united with her Son and co-operated in the work of the Saviour in a manner altogether special. Now that she has been taken up into heaven, ‘with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage....’All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and

apostolate to her motherly concern”. Devotion to Mary Immaculate, the Help of Christians, is one of the characteristics of the Salesian spirit.

Don Bosco also directed the devotion and prayers of his Cooperators to St. Francis of Sales. He must not be neglected: he is our patron, an appealing character, inspiring his own Salesian joy and kindness; the teacher of charity. Yet now that he has for his companion in holiness our Founder himself perhaps it seems natural to address ourselves more directly to Don Bosco as “the father given us by God and by the Church”. Don Bosco must always be our admiration; and this admiration should engender in us a desire to imitate him: “Lord, give me souls: all else is naught”.

*Reference: PAL Regulations, Chapter 4, Article 15*

### **Initiatives for Initial Formation**

1. The formation process accompanies members throughout their lifetime because the Lord always calls us through the continual development of personal and environmental circumstances.
2. To accompany the process of discernment of an aspirant, the Association offers flexible but structured courses whether on a personal or community basis. These include the study and analysis of some formation themes which refer to the human, Christian, ecclesial and Salesian dimensions:
  - a. The Word of God
  - b. Documents of the Church
  - c. Life and Work of Don Bosco
  - d. Don Bosco’s Preventive System
  - e. The Project of Apostolic Life of the Association
  - f. Documents of the Rector Major
  - g. Documents of the Association
  - h. Spirituality and Salesian holiness
  - i. History and development of the Salesian Family charism.
3. Salesian apostolic commitment and participation in the life of the Centre form and integral part of initial formation.

*Reference: PAL Regulations, Chapter 4, Article 17*

### **Formation to the Service of Responsibility**

1. The service of animation and responsibility in the Association is a service of apostolate through which the Association grows and matures in communion, in spiritual life and in the Salesian mission. All Salesian Cooperators may be asked to offer their resources and abilities for a determined period of time in the service of animation and responsibility.
2. The Salesian Cooperator willingly accepts being available for a period of service asked of him or her, carries it out with discernment, takes on the specific formation needed as preparation for the task, according to programmes established by the Association.

At the end of their term of service they give witness to their sense of belonging by an attitude of simple availability to the Association.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 27*

**Entry into the Association**

1. The commitment to become a Salesian Cooperator demands a free, gradual, motivated and mature choice at the urging of the Holy Spirit and accompanied by those responsible for formation. The aspirant, wishing to enter and be a part of the Association, accepts an appropriate preparatory programme.
2. When the aspirant has achieved sufficient maturity in the Salesian charism, recognized as such by those responsible in the Centre, he or she presents a request for admission. However, the individual is required to have reached the age of majority.
3. Belonging to the Association begins with the personal *Promise* which expresses the will to live out one's Baptism according to the Project of Apostolic Life.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 147-148.*



## ***Lesson 23 – Salesian Saints and Blesseds***

### **Objectives**

1. To understand that the Salesian Cooperator vocation is a way to sanctity.
2. To understand that each individual is created with his own unique gifts.
3. To recognize the distinguishable spiritual traits and features of the Salesian saints.
4. To understand Don Bosco's own ardent conviction that it is easy to be a saint.

*Reference: Sanctity in the Salesian Family – J. Puthenkalam S.D.B., A. Mampra S.D.B.*

Among the great spiritual families in the church, the Salesian Family, which has Don Bosco for its Founder, possesses, distinctive traits and features. Don Bosco lived and transmitted to his followers a characteristic Gospel path of holiness of life, which we call Salesian spirituality. It shines most resplendently in the life and work of Don Bosco, and in those immediately connected with him in his mission towards poor and abandoned youth. In the hundred years since his death, others inspired by him have lived and expressed the same spirituality in a variety of ways and with different nuances, but with clearly recognizable affinities. This has given rise to a marvelous sprouting of Salesian sanctity in myriad forms, authenticated and confirmed by the Church. Among these whom the Church has raised to the honors of the Altar in recent times, we have men, women and young people; we find bishops, priests, religious and lay people, martyrs, confessors and virgins. In their number we discover missionaries, who left their homelands for faraway places, apostles of the downtrodden and the sick, and men and women from all walks of life, who braved everything to give their lives to proclaim the Gospel and plant the Church.

Each one is a masterpiece of His grace. In each one His love triumphing over human frailty and evil, has come to fulfillment. Each is a unique marvel. There are no two saints who are the same in every respect. Each is a splendid and extraordinary accomplishment of God's plan for salvation for him or her. At the same time, there are certain recognizable spiritual traits and features in a certain number of them, which group them together as a distinct spiritual family. For, just as there are physical traits and features among members of a natural family, so too- and with greater reason – there are spiritual traits and features which group together members of the same spiritual family. Just as on the natural plane each member of a family is a unique person with his or her own very particular characteristics and also shares with the other members of the family the features and traits that distinguish his family from every other, so too on the spiritual plane, each saint shines out with his or her own unique characteristics, and shares with others those spiritual traits that bind him or her to a spiritual family.

They remind us that Salesian spirituality, which characterizes the Salesian Family, is first and foremost a project of holiness of life, a sanctity lived out in the ordinary run of one's duties, a cheerful and joyful sanctity, which attracts the young, drawing them to virtue, a contagious sanctity, which infects everyone in its radius with enthusiasm and ardour for the salvation of the young.

*Joaquim D'Souza, S.D.B., Regional Councilor, South Asia*

The exemplary lives of these members of the Salesian Family provide us with a rich source of spiritual nourishment. God has created each of us with unique gifts. He has called each of us to fulfill a particular mission in life. We live and work in differing historic times and contexts. We respond to the Lord's call with our own strengths and weaknesses, hopes and fears. We are called to holiness. But we are not called to blindly imitate all or any one of the saints who have gone before us. The lives of these great men and women remind us that saints are not molded into some sort of monotonous uniformity. Instead each of them is unique and, like stars, shed light on our lives.

Sanctity calls for a creative and dynamic response to the Lord’s call to be “perfect as The Heavenly Father is perfect”. No one can measure up fully to this challenge, but all of us can take tiny strides by drawing inspiration and strength, light and love, faith and serenity, optimism and hope from the people who have walked the path of holiness before us. Together their example makes the path easier for us. The light they shed makes our journey less arduous.

The saints of the Salesian Family bring sanctity closer to us. Don Bosco’s own ardent conviction that it is easy to be a saint helped Dominic Savio to become an outstanding model of teenage sanctity. The world today, more than at any time perhaps, looks for models and icons of sanctity. The galaxy of Salesian Family members who have been crowned with the grace of sanctity in the Church is a sure sign of the Spirit’s mark of approval of Don Bosco’s spirit and charism. This rich patrimony he has bequeathed to us can lead us too, to sanctity.

*Thomas Menampampil S.D.B, Archbishop of Guwahatti*

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 4, Article 26, #2 and #3*

### **In Communion with Mary and our Saints**

1. They turn to St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, with particular affection. They have trusting recourse to the intercession of St. John Bosco, “Father and teacher” of the young and of all the Salesian Family.
2. Amongst the models of apostolic life, they especially venerate Saint Francis of Sales, Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Mama Margaret and the other Saints, Blesseds and Venerables of the Salesian Family.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

The tree has already provided its proofs: it has produced its fruit. Salesian holiness is not just a project or a hope. It really exists in the Church and has received her official recognition. Among the Saints, the Blessed, and those whose causes for canonization are being examined there are not only Religious Salesians but also pupils (Dominic Savio, Ceferino Namuncurá and Laura Vicuña) and Cooperators: three victims of the Spanish Civil War and Doña Dorotea (1816-1891); in Italy, Joseph Toniolo (1845-1918), Edvige Carboni (1880-1952); and in Portugal, Alessandrina DaCosta (1904-1955).

#### *Salesian Saints:*

St. John Bosco, Father and Founder	1815-1888
Mother Mary Mazzarello, Co-Foundress of FMA	1837-1881
Dominic Savio	1842-1857
Bishop Louis Versiglia, Salesian Protomartyr	1873-1930
Fr. Callistus Caravario, Salesian Protomartyr	1903-1930

#### *Salesian Blesseds:*

Fr. Michael Rua	1837-1910
Sr. Madeleine Morano	1847-1908
Fr. Philip Rinaldi	1856-1931
Fr. Joseph Calasanz (and 94 Companions)	1872-1936
Fr. Louis Variara	1875-1923
Bro. Artemides Zatti	1880-1951

Laura Vicuña	1891-1904
Sr. Maria Romero	1902-1977
Fr. August Czartoryski	1858-1893
Ceferino Namuncurá	1886-1905
Sr. Eusebia Palomino	1899-1935
Alexandrina da Costa, Cooperator	1904-1955
Albert Marvelli	1918-1946
Sr. Maria Troncatti	1883-1969
Bro. Stephen Sandor	1914-1953
Fr. Joseph Kowalski	1912-1942
<i>Five Poznan Oratory Youths:</i>	
Franciszek Keszy (23)	
Czeslaw Jozwiak (22)	
Edward Klinik (23)	
Jarogniew Wojciechowski (20)	
Edward Kazmierski (22)	

*Salesian Venerables:*

Dorothy Chopitea, Cooperator	1816-1891
Fr. Andrew Beltrami	1870-1897
Bro. Simon Srugi	1877-1943
Sr. Teresa Valse Pantellini	1878-1907
Fr. Vincent Cimatti	1879-1965
Fr. Rudolph Komorek	1890-1949
Bishop Louis Olivares	1873-1943
Margaret Occhiena Bosco	1788-1856
Fr. Joseph Quadrio	1921-1963
Sr. Laura Meozzi	1873-1951
Attilio Giordani, Cooperator	1913-1972
Fr. August Arribat	1879-1963

**The Saints**

In the words of Don Bosco: Let us therefore be devoted to the saints whose name we bear and have recourse to them in our spiritual and temporal needs. They will always be ready to help us.

The virtues and the actions of the saints were all oriented toward the same end, which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

**Suggested Reading**

*In the Footsteps of Don Bosco; pages 149-150.*



## ***Lesson 24 – The Promise***

### **Objectives**

1. To study and understand the words of the Promise.
2. To reflect on how the Promise is lived out daily.
3. To encourage daily renewal of the Promise.
4. To explain the implications of the Promise, both canonical and spiritual.

*Reference: The Salesian Cooperator, Joseph Aubry S.D.B.*

Official entry into the Association takes place by the making of a personal “Promise”, by which the Cooperator expresses their will to live their baptismal call in accordance with the present Project of Apostolic Life. They then receive their certificate of membership of the Association. The commitment to be a Cooperator lasts all through life.

What was Don Bosco’s mind about the Promise? Before the Regulations of 1876 --- Anyone who undertakes a serious study of the relationship of Don Bosco with his Cooperators – (and let us remember that they were the first and even the only ones to help him during the first eighteen years of his apostolate, given that the Salesian Society was founded only on 18 December 1859) – are surprised at the strictness with which he always wanted to bind them to himself personally and to his works. He never looked on them as mere occasional helpers, but as cooperators who shared in his charism, and whom God himself had sent to form part of his movement for the salvation of the young and for the faith of the common people.

His bold and daring plan to found a single complex Salesian Society is well known. It was to consist of two kinds of members: those who bound themselves by religious vows, and “aggregate members” who remained in the world but committed themselves to a way of life as close as possible to that of their religious brothers and sisters. All were to have the same Rule, because all had the same ideal: their common sanctification by the working together for the salvation of the young. The famous “Chapter XVI” of the plan presented to Rome in 1864 ran as follows (cf. MB 7, 885):

1. Any person even living without vows and in his own home and with his own family, can belong to our Society.
2. He does not take vows, but must practice those Rules which are compatible with his age, state and condition – teaching or promoting catechetics among poor children, helping to spread good books, promote triduums, novenas, retreats and other works of charity especially directed to the good of youth and the working classes.
3. To share in the spiritual benefits of the Society the member must make at least a “Promise” to the Rector to engage himself in matters that in his judgment will tend to the greater glory of God.
4. This “Promise” however does not oblige under pain of even venial sin.

We may note that the “Promise”, expressed in these terms, is not made before God as is the present practice. But the important thing is the manifestation of a free and personal commitment in the hands of the major superior. Salesian religious made vows; Salesian Cooperators made the “Promise”.

*Reference: Vatican II, Apostolicam Actuositatem – Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People*

The most holy council, then, earnestly entreats all the laity in the Lord to answer gladly, nobly, and promptly the more urgent invitation of Christ in this hour and the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Younger persons should feel that this call has been directed to them especially and they should respond to it eagerly

and generously. Through this holy synod, the Lord renews His invitation to all the laity to come closer to Him every day, recognizing that what is His is also their own ( Phil. 2.5), to associate themselves with Him in His saving mission. Once again he sends them into every town and place where he will come (cf . Lk 10.1) so that they may show that they are co-workers in the various forms and modes of the one apostolate of the Church, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of our times. Ever productive as they should be in the work of the Lord, they know that their labor in Him is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

*Reference: Mark 1: 14-20*

### **The First Four Disciples are Called**

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. ‘The time has come’ he said ‘and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe in the Good News.’

As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men’. And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending their nets. He called them at once and leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

*Reference: PAL Regulations, Chapter 4, Article 14*

### **Sense of Belonging**

1. To help the growth of a sense of belonging to the Association, and to constantly nourish their vocation, the Council in each Local Centre offers the Salesian Cooperator the possibility of renewing the Promise annually, preferably on a Salesian feast day.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 32*

### **The Promise and Its Meaning**

1. The meaning and scope of the promise is to express the will to live out the baptismal option according to the Project of Apostolic Life. Don Bosco himself proposed the promise as an apostolic expression of their Salesian vocation in the world.
2. The Promise

“Father, I adore You because You are so good and because You love each one of us. I thank You for having created and redeemed me, for having called me to be a part of Your Church and for having made Don Bosco’s apostolic Family part of it. This Family lives for You in the service of the young and ordinary people. Drawn by your merciful Love, I want to love you in return by doing good.

For this reason, after preparing myself,

I PROMISE

To commit myself to living the evangelical Project of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators, that is:

- To be Christ's faithful disciple in the Catholic Church;
- To work in Your Kingdom, especially for the welfare and salvation of the young;
- To deepen and witness to the Salesian spirit;
- To co-operate, in Family communion, in all the apostolic initiatives of the local Church.

Grant me, Father, the strength of Your Spirit, so I may always be faithful to this proposal in my life, Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, Help me and guide me. Amen”.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 28*

### **Value of Belonging**

1. The Salesian Cooperators are aware that belonging to the Association is a privileged experience of faith and ecclesial communion. It also means that it is a vital element in sustaining their own apostolic vocation.
2. They recognize that this belonging demands concrete signs of presence and active participation in the life of the Association.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 30*

### **Faithfulness to Tasks Assumed**

1. To be a Salesian Cooperator is a vocation lasting an entire lifetime. With a profound sense of belonging, Salesian Cooperators know how to constantly express their witness, apostolate, and kinds of service. They are called by God to live the Salesian charism in the Association, in openness and availability also to working in initiatives fostered by other agencies, church or religious organizations.

Their fidelity is supported by the affection and solidarity of the members of the Association and of the Salesian Family.

2. To consolidate the value of belonging to the Association - and through this to the Salesian Family - the commitments of association made by means of the Promise will be confirmed according to the most appropriate manner established by the Regulations.

*Reference: PAL Statutes, Chapter 5, Article 31*

### **Leaving the Association**

1. The Salesian Cooperators, who intends, by personal choice, to cease to belong to the Association, will present the Local Council with a written statement attesting to his/her decision. The Local Council will give copies of the statement to the Provincial Council.
2. The Association's decision to exclude one of its members for serious reasons is to be taken by the Provincial Council following the reasoned request of the Local Council. This is done in a spirit of charity and clarity after judging a life style which is not coherent with the fundamental duties expressed in the Statutes and Regulations, and the decision is to be communicated in writing to the one concerned.

*Reference: John 15:16*

You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commission you to go out and to bear fruit and that your fruit be abundant.



## ***How Did Don Bosco See The Cooperators?***

*We find the answer in some texts extracted from Don Bosco's writings and speeches.*

### **The History of the Salesian Cooperators**

“The History of the Salesian Cooperators goes back to 1841 when the work of gathering poor and abandoned young people started in the city of Turin...”

### **The Biographical Memoirs Vol. XI, p. 84-86**

As soon as the work of the Oratories began in 1841, there were very enthusiastic and keen priests and lay people who came forward to help – for there was a great harvest which at that moment looked abundant among the young boys at risk, in danger of losing both faith and morals. These collaborators, or Cooperators, were at all times throughout our history the support and sustain of the works that the Divine Providence disposed at our hands. 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 will now be satisfied by the present booklet (“*The Regulations for the Cooperators*”). These are not rules for the Festive Oratories or for educational institutes, which can be found elsewhere; they are a bond by which Catholics who so wish may join the Salesians and work according to a uniform and stable pattern...

May the Lord, so rich in grace and blessings grant many favours to all those who help to win souls for our Divine Saviour, doing good to young people so much in danger, prepare good Christians for the Church and honest citizens for society, so that all may one day find themselves eternally happy in heaven. Amen.

*Preface to the Regulations published in Albenga, 12 July 1876*

### **A Definition**

“Cooperators are called those who wish to carry out works of charity, not in a general sense, but in concrete ways, according and following the spirit of the Congregation of St. Francis of Sales. One single Cooperator on his own can do a lot of good, however the fruit is very much limited and at the most of little duration. On the other hand, when united with others, obtains support, advice, courage, and often with little effort obtains much, because forces, even if they're weak, become stronger when they're united. Hence the famous saying “Union makes us strong...”, therefore our Cooperators, following the purpose of the Salesian Congregation will take on the mission, according to their abilities, of taking care of young people in danger and abandoned in streets and parks, of teaching them catechism, entertaining them during holidays or feast days, placing them with decent jobs and honest bosses, guiding, counseling and helping them as much as possible to make them good Christians and honest citizens. The norms to follow in the works, which we will propose to Cooperators, will be part of the content of the Salesian Bulletin.”

*Don Bosco, in the first Salesian Bulletin edition, August 1877*

“Cooperators are no more than good Christians, who while living in the midst of their own families, maintain in the midst of the world the spirit of the Congregation of St. Francis of Sales, and help her with moral and material means to the aim of helping her especially in the Christian education of the youth. They are a kind of third order, whose purpose is the exercise of works of charity towards their neighbour, primarily towards the young people in danger”.

*1<sup>st</sup> General Chapter*

### **The Purpose of this Association**

“The purpose of this Association is to unite the laity and priests in undertaking whatever will be considered conducive to God’s greater glory and welfare of souls. The means will be zeal for God’s glory and energetic charity to employ whatever may spiritually and materially contribute toward such a purpose without selfish interests or vainglory. Every good Christian may join this Association as long as he is determined to work in accordance with its goal and means”.

*Reference: The Biographical Memoirs, Volume X, p. 1309*

“It is imperative that you thoroughly grasp the aims of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. Its purpose is not only to support our works, but also for its members to do all they possibly can to join forces for the salvation of their fellow Christians, especially the young. Let them strive to promote children’s catechism classes and volunteer to help their parish priests with them. Let them prepare children for Holy Communion and provide them with proper clothing. Let them spread wholesome literature and forcefully oppose all irreligious, immoral publications. All these things are part of the Salesian Cooperators “commitment”.

*Reference: The Biographical Memoirs, Volume XV, p. 500*

The purpose of this Association is to bring good Christians together so that they may benefit civil society and foster good moral living, especially among youth in danger...not only is the Association of Cooperators not in conflict with the tradition of tertiaries, but it complements it. Pope Pious IX himself, in addressing this question, stated: “The world is material minded and so we must show it something visible”. In our case, this refers to our Cooperators. The primary aim of the tertiaries of St. Francis of Assisi is to sanctify themselves through practices of piety, and the basic principle of the Cooperators is the practice of charity. Both of these aims are directed to God’s glory and the good of souls.

*Reference: The Biographical Memoirs, Volume XVI, p. 21*

“I have studied very much about the way of founding the Salesian Cooperators. Their true and main purpose is not that of helping the Salesians, but of helping the Church, the bishops, parish priests, under the “high” direction of the Salesians in the works of charity, catechism, education of poor children. Helping Salesians is just one of the many ways of helping the Catholic Church. It’s true that we can appeal to them in our urgencies, but they are in instrument in the hands of the bishop. The only one who until now has understood this properly is the bishop of Padova who said clearly that nobody should feel any jealousy towards the Salesian Cooperators, because they belong to the dioceses and that every parish priest and every parishioner should become a Cooperator.

*Reference: The Biographical Memoirs, Volume XVII, p. 25*

The Union of Cooperators, the Work of the Pope has been found to shake up Christians from the apathy in which so many of them live and to spread the driving force of charity...a work that today appears exceptionally relevant...The Cooperators will extend to every country, it will spread throughout Christianity. There will come a day when the name of Cooperator will be the same as true Christian. The hand of God sustains it. The Cooperators will be the ones who foster the Catholic spirit.

## **Commitment and Activity**

### **From the Conference of Women Cooperators in Turin**

“First, make efforts to kindly to instill love of virtue and horror for sin into your children’s hearts and those of your neighbours, relatives, friends and acquaintances. If you come to know that some young girl’s morals are being threatened, promptly strive to save her and put her beyond the reach of rapacious wolves. Should you know or hear that some family has boys or girls of school or work age, be quick enough to suggest, advice and exhort their parents or family to place them in schools or shops where, as they learn knowledge and skills, they may also absorb the holy fear of God in a morally safe environment. Make every effort to introduce in your homes good Catholic literature, books, magazines, and when you have read them, pass them on to as many people as you can. Give them as gifts to boys and girls who faithfully attend catechism classes. But above all when you know that a girl can be saved from moral dangers only by placing her in a boarding school, make every effort to do so.

I most earnestly recommend to your care well beloved, pious boys who give signs of priestly vocation. Yes, esteemed ladies, take these hopes of the Church to your heart and so all you can – even the impossible, I’d say – to cherish and bring the blossom the precious seed of a vocation in their young hearts. Direct them to a place where they can continue their studies and, if they don’t have the economic resources, help them with whatever means Divine Providence has put into your own hands, or as your own piety and love for souls suggest to you. How fortunate you will be if you provide the Church with priests in these times when they are so scarce that some of our own villages have no Sunday Mass or worship service.

*From the Conference of Women Cooperator in Turin, on the vigil of the feast of Mary Help of Christians, 1879. The Biographical Memoirs Vol. XIV, 132-134*

### **From the First Conference in Borgo San Martino**

I have stated that a good Cooperator is one who practices a deed of charity as the occasion arises. This is not difficult a task for any good Christian. See how many great opportunities come up – a word of good advice to youngsters to guide them in virtue and save them away from vicious things, a suggestion to parents on how they can give their children a Christian upbringing, a reminder to them to church, to choose a school or a job where they will have upright teachers and honest employers. You can see to it that schools hire only reputable teachers. You can help out in teaching catechism in your parish. You can give or lend good books, spread good literature, and offer a Catholic paper to replace a bad one. You can help one complete his work, donate clothing, seek jobs for the unemployed, or support a homeless or abandoned boy or girl by paying for that child’s tuition. You can promote undertakings which will glorify God, honor the Church and benefit souls. At the very last, you can exhort others to do these things. There is never any lack of opportunity to do good or prevent evil. Let us not be wanting in good will or courage, in love for God and neighbour. Without becoming aware of it, as fathers, mothers, teachers, priests, lay people, rich and poor, we shall be true Cooperators, thwarting evil and accomplishing much good”.

You might remark, “as long as it’s a matter of helping others by speaking, I can do that, but I am poor and my material means are limited”. Let the poor do just what they can, but regardless of one’s poverty, any Cooperator who so wishes will always be able to contribute also financially...

*From the first conference in Borgo San Martin, The Biographical Memoirs Vol. XIV, 542-547*

### **Identity of the Association in the Salesian Family**

“This is for us a very important Association; it is the soul of our Congregation. In doing good, it is our linkage with good faithful living in the world, as are the Salesian Cooperators...now it is necessary that we have friends, benefactors, people that, while practicing fully the spirit of the Salesians, live in their families, as Salesian Cooperators do. They are our help in our need, our support in our difficulty, our collaborators

in everything that we should do for the greater glory of God, and for which we lack the material means or the persons.

These Cooperators should multiply as much as possible”.

*1<sup>st</sup> General Chapter, Arch Chap S 04 (1:1877) 3 – n. 32 page 9.*

**When Don Bosco summarized his thoughts and vision of his Cooperators in a set of Regulations, what did he say?**

We simply quote two fundamental passages:

“The fundamental scope of the Salesian Cooperators is to do good to themselves by leading a life similar to that which is observed by religious in the common life, in so far as they are able. Many would be willing to enter the Cloister but, because of age, health or condition, or through lack of opportunity, they are absolutely prevented. These people by becoming Salesian Cooperators can continue to remain in the midst of their ordinary occupations, in the bosom of their own families, and live as if they were in Congregation. For that reason this Association is considered by the Holy Father as a Third Order with this difference, that in the older Third Orders, Christian perfection was proposed in the exercise of piety. This has for its main end an active life in the exercise of charity towards one neighbour and especially towards youth who are in moral danger”.

**The Regulations of Don Bosco, No. 3, 1876**

“The same work is proposed for the Salesian Cooperators as is done by the Society of St Frances of Sales, with which they intend to associate”.

**The Regulations of Don Bosco, No. 4, 1876**

How many have ignored these texts, and therefore they continue to propagate mistaken ideas about the Salesian Cooperator.

- Jose Reinoso

## ***The Turning Point: The Special General Chapter***

The long work of this Chapter, that also underwent moments of strained dialogue, was rewarded at the end with the production of two declarations (one to the Salesians, the other to the Cooperators); these became the source of the new awareness of the Congregation regarding the Cooperators and they are found in Document 18 of SGC. Their attentive reading will be a great help to the Salesians as well as to the Cooperators. They contain the **Rediscovery of Don Bosco's Project on the Cooperators**.

We will underscore here only the most significant thoughts.

### **Definition of the Cooperator**

The SGC XX defines the Cooperator as one who, according to Don Bosco's original idea is:

- A true Salesian-in-the-world,
- Namely a Christian who follows his vocation to holiness by involving himself – even without religious vows,
- In working for youth or ordinary working people,
- In the spirit of Don Bosco.
- For the service of the local Church and
- In communion with the Salesian Congregation.

### **Contents of the Definition**

We can say that the definition contains the principal features of the renewed Cooperators:

- His/her vocation is “*an authentic apostolic Salesian vocation*”, specific of the Salesian Cooperator, of “*a true Salesian-in-the-world*”, of a secular Salesian, “*a layperson or a priest*” called and enlightened by the Holy Spirit;
- It is *a call to holiness* that is achieved according to the rule of the Salesian spiritual life.
- It is *a call to the apostolate* that is carried out in the Salesian style but adapted to the secular life, that is qualified by the following:
  - o Adeptness and freedom, shown in rapid and convincing interventions, sensitivity to the needs and intuition regarding the means to be used;
  - o The presence of the Salesian among the young and among the working class; present among them in the concrete situation in which they find themselves;
  - o The apostolate belongs to “a unique family” joined by links of fraternal charity, starting with the choice of goals on to the means to be used to obtain them.
- It is *a service to the local church* even when it is carried out in works of the SDB's because the Congregation itself is at the service of the local church.
- It is done *in communion with the Salesian Congregation* and this includes many and profound elements which are supernatural, spiritual, and human such as baptism, vocation, mission, spirit, apostolic fraternity; consequently , co-responsibility, dialogue, exchanging and sharing of experiences, togetherness in pastoral presences, the family style characteristic of Don Bosco.

Even the figure of the Rector Major, while keeping his position as superior, is seen in the light of the one who fulfills a service of mission and of communion with the Cooperators among themselves and among the other groups of the Salesian family.

### **Principles underlying the invitation to change in mentality**

To give a global idea of the change in mentality that the SGC XX called for so as to have a more accurate idea of what the concept of Cooperator stands for, the document accentuated other important elements, particularly in the relationship between the Cooperators and the Congregation.

- The socialization and the promotion of the laity were seen in the co-responsibility among priests, lay people and religious. When this would take place in the Salesian Family, the Cooperators would feel that they are not just recipients and docile doers of orders that they have received but that they have an irreplaceable and necessary contribution to make to help the Family in building up the Church and in carrying out the mission.

Consequently, it is necessary to have a clear idea of their identity as lay persons, of their complimentary within the Salesian vocation, their unique presence so that the Salesians might be really what Don Bosco wanted them to be, that is, bond of unity, a center of the movement, stimuli to fidelity, witnesses to the spirit of the Council. All these have been necessary so that the Cooperators might animate the earthly reality with the gospel and Salesian values, as they would uphold in the world the same values that the Salesians are living in their community life.

- Parting from this, one may understand the expression attributed to the Cooperators as the “first and necessary collaborators of the Salesians, specifically different from all the other lay collaborators. The fact of the Cooperators being irreplaceable would explain why without them the Salesians would not be the Salesians that Don Bosco wanted them to be.
- Regarding the commitments in connection with the mission, the SGC XX recommended those wanted by Don Bosco, but along the line of dynamic fidelity to “the sign of the times”; it underscored some new perspectives such as “catechesis in a secularized society, the family within a pluralistic point of view, the religious and lay vocations, the mission and the lay missionaries, the collaboration in the educational works of the Congregation.

Other proposed tasks were new: commitment to world justice, assuming works and activities as Cooperators, Christian influence on means of social communications.

(N.B. We insist on the fact that what is said here does not dispense us from an attentive rereading of the document, especially for those among us who truly want to be well acquainted with the renewed vision of the figure of the Cooperator.)

## ***Conclusions on the First Century of the Association's Life***

The first century of the Association's life (1876-1976), seen through the SDBs General Chapters, brought light to the following ideas.

### **Four Periods**

The life of the Association in this first century can be divided into four distinct periods:

1. From the Rules for the Cooperators written by Don Bosco till 1920

The Pious Union spread and saw the Salesian Cooperators in terms of going along and helping in the Salesian works, especially in their economic aspect; but gradually, because of the linkage with the hierarchy through the directors and the decurions (leaders), particularly where there were no Salesians, the apostolic involvement in the Church, specifically at the local levels, developed.

2. From the Congress of Turin (1920) till the GC XVII (1947)

There prevailed during this period the collaboration with the Congregation, especially at the economic level, notably do to the extraordinary flourishing of the Salesian works; as a consequence, a certain aloofness on the part of the Pious Union crept in regarding involvement in the lay apostolate, which during this period became stronger in the Church. Because of the war, the Association experienced a certain standstill.

3. From 1947 to the SGC XX

Stimulated by the lay apostolic movements, the new theology and the Conciliar impetus, the Pious Union renewed itself and took the shape of an international apostolic movement in the Salesian style. Following some papal interventions and the spirit of pluralism recognized by the Council, the Pious Union obtained full recognition in the Church. The new vision encouraged the Cooperators to ask...and they actually obtained...greater autonomy, co-responsibility, and decentralization in relation with the Congregation, at the level of the provincial and national councils.

4. From the SGC XX onwards

The on-going relaunching of the Association and the perspectives of the Salesian Family at the service of the local Church has renewed the rapport between the Pious Union (the Association) and the Congregation. Though not renouncing the traditional, constitutional, and juridical bases of their relationship, this relationship has also been seen as rooted in communion, in the specificity of the common vocation, in the spirit and mission, in view of a fraternal exchange of spiritual goods and services, aimed at a more incisive spiritual renewal and at a more fruitful and efficacious common work.

### **Important Considerations Resulting from a Comparison between the Cooperator of the SGC and that of Don Bosco**

1. One's commitment to personal holiness stands out and is reinforced not only through the various practices designed to help attain it (days of recollection, spiritual retreats, revision of life) but above all through a keen sense of vocation, a reality that should be well-known and closely followed, a keen sense of a spirit to be deepened and lived, a keen sense of commitment that should be accepted. Schools for forming candidates applying to make "the promise" have come

up, which was an evident attempt to return to the idea of Don Bosco. The program for lay Salesian formation and the literature, requested by the SGC, has further developed this trend which has already been codified in the New Regulations for Apostolic Life (RAF).

2. “Secularity enriches the one who makes of his life in the world and of his ordinary occupations a specific commitment and lives his vocation as a true Salesian-in-the-world. Here are also included the priests Cooperators; this also opens up new avenues for secular Salesian institutes, considering that the Don Bosco Volunteers were an offshoot of a branch of Cooperators called “zelatrici” at the time of Don Rinaldi. In short, there has been a transition from the committed secularity to the consecrated one.
3. Decentralization, pluralism, flexibility, greater autonomy, co-responsibility, the quality of being representational, beside responding to the demands of socialization and permitting an active insertion in the Salesian Family, as a bigger “union of good people” and likening the Association of the Cooperators to the new image of the Church and to the demands for communion...all these do not go against unity but reinforce it by means of more felt and lasting values, giving birth to the urgency of searching for the institutional unity of the Family.
4. Union with the Congregation is the result of having the same Founder, of upholding the Founder’s intention, of the unity of spirit, of having the same mission and of belonging to the same Salesian Family, of becoming aware that it is impossible to be completely by ourselves if there are no others with whom to confront ourselves, to dialogue, communicate and to collaborate. In this perspective, a new emphasis is given to the recognition of the Rector Major as the superior who represents Don Bosco and is the heart of the Salesian Family. A clear distinction and integration of roles increases the need to be united so that each one is able to realize himself fully.
5. Don Bosco’s will to serve the Church is reinforced with new theological and Salesian insights. The Cooperator not only works in the Church; he enriches it with the secular dimension of the charism which he carries himself, thus contributing to the birth of a Salesian spirituality, a new possibility offered to souls; he enriches it with a special service...for the youth and the ordinary people...within the mission of the Church and according to the pastoral style inspired by Don Bosco.
6. The Cooperators offer themselves to the Church for a specialized mission towards the young and the poor, who have a special place in the heart of Don Bosco and whom Don Bosco considered as his “harvest”; the young and the poor are the two sectors in society towards whom the Church looks with renewed interest: the young because they are the future; the poor because they are the first to whom the gospel is addressed.
7. Secondly, they carry out their mission with a style that is theirs, the Christian humanism of Don Bosco that highly respects human values which is a mark of the missionary church of Vatican II.
8. The direct cooperation with the Congregation is realized in different forms: prayer, reciprocal encouragement aimed at renewal and fidelity, and exchange of spiritual goods...which goes further than the simple granting of spiritual favors; without underestimating its value, one who has received the diploma can claim such favors. The distinction between benefactors and Cooperators does not exclude economic help in the Salesian projects which may become an act of solidarity between the groups of the same Family; however, co-responsibility in the various activities even to the point of assuming management of the SDB’s works is added.

***Appendix***

***In the Footsteps of Don Bosco***

*All text contained "In the Footsteps of Don Bosco" are taken from the booklets as published by the Salesian Missions.*

## ***The Dream of Don Bosco***

From the tender age of nine John Bosco was favored by God with dreams that indicated his future vocation. God revealed to John Bosco that he had been chosen to be a priest and the founder of a religious order. God announced that this order would become famous for its work with the young. This order now bears the name of the Salesians of John Bosco.

### **In His Own Words**

“When I was about nine years old I had a dream that left a profound impression on me for the rest of my life. I dreamed that I was near my home, in a very large playing field where a crowd of children were having fun. Some were laughing, others were playing and not a few were cursing. I was so shocked at their language that I jumped into their midst, swinging wildly and shouting at them to stop. At that moment a Man appeared, nobly attired, with a manly and imposing bearing. He was clad with a white flowing mantle and his face radiated such light that I could not look directly at him. He called me by my name and told me to place myself as leader over those boys, adding the words:

“You will have to win these friends of yours not with blows, but with gentleness and kindness. So begin right now to show them that sin is ugly and virtue beautiful.’

“Confused and afraid, I replied that I was only a boy and unable to talk to these youngsters about religion. At that moment the fighting, shouting and cursing stopped and the crowd of boys gathered about the Man who was now talking. Almost unconsciously I asked:

“But how can you order me to do something that looks so impossible?”

“What seems so impossible you must achieve by being obedient and by acquiring knowledge.’

“But where, how?”

“I will give you a Teacher, under whose guidance you will learn and without whose help all knowledge becomes foolishness.’

“But who are you?”

“I am the Son of Her whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day.’

“My mother told me not to talk to people I don't know, unless she gives me permission. So, please tell me your name.’

“Ask my mother.’

“At that moment I saw beside him a Lady of majestic appearance, wearing a beautiful mantle glowing as if bedecked with stars. She saw my confusion mount; so she beckoned me to her. Taking my hand with great kindness she said:

“Look!’

“I did so. All the children had vanished. In their place I saw many animals: goats, dogs, cats, bears and a variety of others.

“This is your field, this is where you must work’, the Lady told me. ‘Make yourself humble, steadfast and strong. And what you will see happen to these animals you will have to do for my children.’

“I looked again; the wild animals had turned into as many lambs, gently gamboling lambs, bleating a welcome for that Man and Lady.

“At this point of my dream I started to cry and begged the Lady to explain what it all meant because I was so utterly confused. She then placed her hand on me.

“‘In due time everything will be clear to you.’

“After she had spoken these words, some noise awoke me; everything had vanished. I was completely bewildered. Somehow my hands still seemed to ache and my cheeks still stung because of all the fighting. Moreover, my conversation with that Man and Lady so disturbed my mind that I was unable to sleep any longer that night.

“In the morning I could barely wait to tell about my dream. When my brothers heard it, they burst out laughing. I then told my mother and grandmother. Each one who heard it gave it a different interpretation. My brother Joseph said:

“‘You’re going to become a shepherd and take care of goats, sheep and livestock.’

“My mother’s comment was: ‘Who knows? Maybe you will become a priest.’

“Dryly, Anthony muttered: ‘You might become the leader of a gang of robbers.’

“But my very religious, illiterate grandmother had the last word: ‘You mustn’t pay attention to dreams.’

“I felt the same way about it, yet I could never get that dream out of my head. What I am about to relate may give some new insight to it. I never brought up the matter and my relatives gave no importance to it. But in 1858, when I went to Rome to confer with the Pope about the Salesian Congregation, Pius IX asked me to tell him everything that might have even only the slightest bearing on the supernatural. Then for the first time I told him the dream that I had when I was nine. The Pope ordered me to write it in detail for the encouragement of the members of the Congregation, for whose sake I had gone to Rome.”

## ***Chapter 1 – Father and Teacher***

### **Introduction**

Throughout history, God has sent prophets and saints to warn, teach and lead His people. Modern times are no exception. God has sent saints to found religious orders of men and women for particular needs. He has sent martyrs as witnesses to the Faith, virgins as defenders of chastity, and holy men, such as Don Bosco, the subject of this brief biography, in order to teach virtue and apostleship to a special portion of God's people – namely, youth.

### **A Troubled City**

Political intrigue, assassinations, urban riots, and civil wars wrecked Western Europe as it struggled to establish democratic governments during the 19th century. The continent's Christians, bitterly divided, offered feeble opposition to militant atheists.

Turin, a gracious northern Italian city nestled at the foot of the Alps' snowcapped peaks, had seen better days than those of the winter of 1846. So skillfully had ancient Roman engineers designed the town's main streets and squares that for centuries travelers praised Turin as "the loveliest village in the world." Many aristocratic families traced their ancestry to the days when Roman legions, garrisoned at Turin, had guarded Italy's northern reaches and controlled the Alpine passes through which commerce, and occasionally invading armies, moved into Italy.

With this magnificent scenic setting, cultured population, and commercial importance, the city, very early in its history, developed a distinct aristocratic style. In the times of which we write, the House of Savoy, royal rulers of northern Italy, held court there.

But all was not serene. Nineteenth-century Turin, like so many European and American cities, was changing from a quiet provincial center into a busy industrial city. As more and more factories appeared, more and more people flowed from northern Italy's farms and out of the Alpine valleys to seek the employment and excitement offered by Turin.

The recently arrived working class crowded into filthy, airless tenements, sometimes six or eight to a room. Vice, disease, and crime flourished; for most slum dwellers God was a dim memory associated with the farms or dairies they had abandoned for the city. Vicious gangs of young toughs formed in the streets and often invaded Turin's better sections, leaving a trail of robberies, muggings and occasionally murders in their wake. City fathers increased the police force and administered justice swiftly. "The loveliest village in the world," now claiming a population of 150,000 people, boasted no less than four good-sized prisons. Many inmates were mere boys, some not yet in their teens.

### **The Piped Piper**

A new problem now plagued Turin's harassed citizenry. At its root was, of all things, a slightly off beat priest. For the past several years this cleric, known as Don Bosco, had been leading a band of singing, shouting slum boys through Turin's stylish streets. The priest, clad in battered biretta, patched cassock, and peasant work shoes, had started with a handful of boys. Now the original pack had swollen into a horde numbering some 400. Although the boys had not yet committed any crime, citizens worried about Bosco's ability to control his small army.

Government authorities, newspaper editors, and enemies feared that Father Bosco was laying the foundations of a future political power base. In Italy's then unstable political climate such an assumption was not unreasonable. The Italy of Father Bosco's time was not the united country we know today. It was

divided into seven different states. Austrian and French royal houses ruled a good half of the nation. The papal states, ruled by Pope Pius IX, straddled the nation's central portion. When Pius IX, who had no army, refused to support a war to throw out the Austrian occupiers, many Italians judged the Pontiff a defender of foreign rulers and an opponent of national unity. The vast tide of anticlericalism, which had been building for years, swept over the land.

Enemies of the Church drove bishops from their dioceses, suppressed religious houses, and exiled priests, Sisters and Brothers. Pope Pius IX and the Italian clergy became the favorite whipping boys of the liberal revolutionary press.

Hatred reached a boiling point when revolutionary gangs, in November 1848, broke into Pope Pius IX's Roman palace, stabbed his prime minister, and fatally shot one of the Pope's staff. Slipping out a secret door, Pope Pius IX fled to the kingdom of Naples, where he remained in exile for six months.

Because of the nature of his work and the success he had already enjoyed with youth, John Bosco became a favorite target. To all charges he calmly replied: "In politics I side with no one. I am a priest. The only kingdom I serve is the Kingdom of God."

### **From the Age of Nine**

John had been yearning to serve that kingdom since he was a small boy. "At the age of nine," he wrote, "I knew I wanted to be a priest and to help young people." He had no easy time in making his dream come true.

His father, a hardworking farmer, died when John was not yet two years old. His mother, Margaret, held her family together, running the small Bosco farm, raising three children, and supporting her own elderly and infirm mother-in-law. Margaret, a woman of sterling character and enormous courage, proved equal to the relentless and often bitter struggle to survive.

But despite their poverty, Margaret encouraged John to build his dream. Although lacking money and influence, young John Bosco was not without resources. He possessed an amazing array of talents. His physical coordination, even as a youngster, was superb. At country fairs he studied the magician's tricks and the daredevil's acrobatic stunts. Back home he practiced these feats until he could imitate and often excel his mentors. Although suffering many a bruise and sprain in the process, John never lost his enthusiasm for his dangerous recreation.

He knew that "magic" tricks and tightrope balancing would attract young people to him.

His physical prowess, however, pales before his mental acumen. Highly intelligent, John possessed a formidable memory. This talent came to light one evening when, during the course of a parish mission, the pastor inquired if John understood the missionary's sermon. The little boy of only nine years repeated without mistake every word the missionary had preached. Remember, this was in the day when no missionary would dare descend the pulpit unless he had spoken for at least an hour!

As John grew to young manhood, he reached medium height. His face, open and frank, was crowned by a rich crop of curly chestnut hair. He was cheerful, disciplined, and had a tremendous capacity for work.

### **No Superman**

Young Bosco had his faults, too. Even as a young man, his feelings and emotions ran deep and strong. He could be impetuous; he was not above, on a rare occasion, settling problems with his fists.

He judged himself so full of self-pride that he deeply feared he would use his future position as a parish priest to feed his cravings for prestige. So successfully, however, did John keep all these forces within him under control that calmness and peacefulness characterized his whole life and his relationships with others.

### **The Road to the Priesthood**

John had to work very hard for his seminary education. During the long years of study, he picked up a variety of jobs and learned a host of trades. Before reaching ordination, John could make candy, repair shoes, design and mend suits, manage a restaurant, and put on a one-man circus. His showmanship attracted small youngsters. After he had the little ones suitably awed, he'd slip in a catechism lesson or two.

### **A Priest Forever**

In 1841 Turin's Archbishop Fransoni ordained John, now twenty-five, a priest for his archdiocese. Shortly after ordination, the Archbishop approved Bosco for an intensive five-year course of postgraduate theology at Turin's Ecclesiastical College.

College authorities, aware that many Italian priests refused to mix with the people because of the anti-clerical hatred, insisted that the young theology scholars mix with the city's population, particularly the poor. Thus John visited and worked in the hospitals, prisons, orphanages, and slum sections. This firsthand experience with cultured Turin's grubby underside shocked his sensitive and gentle heart.

It was, however, the young slum boys' plight that bothered him most. At nine years of age, John had dreamed of becoming a priest. He had accomplished this. Now he had to make real the second part of the dream to serve young people.

### **Always on Sunday**

He started. When still a graduate student, he persuaded a few youngsters to meet with him Sunday afternoons at the College courtyard.

Patiently he established a relationship with the street kids based on the famous saying of St. Francis de Sales: "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Catch flies he did. Apprentice brought apprentice; street kid brought street kid; orphan brought orphan. As John moved through Turin's slums, he invited youngsters to his Sunday get-togethers at the College. He called these gatherings his "Oratory." The Oratory featured songs, prayers, and catechism as well as horseplay, contests, long walks, and picnics.

A pioneer disciple remembered those pleasant Sundays. "At the end of each Sunday excursion," he recalled, "Don Bosco always told us to plan for next Sunday. He gave us advice as to our conduct and asked us, if we had any friends, to invite them, too. Joy reigned among us. Those happy days are engraved in our memories and influenced our future lives.

Arriving at some church in the outskirts of town, Don Bosco would ask permission of the parish priest to play. The permission was always granted, and then at a signal the noisy band gathered together. Catechism followed breakfast: The grass and rocks supplied the plates and tables. It is true, bread failed now and then, but cheerfulness, never. "We sang while walking, and at sunset we marched back again into Turin. We were fatigued, but our hearts were content."

Not everyone in Turin was content. Indeed, John, having completed his College residency, could find no place to gather almost 400 boys. Some generous people did try to help. But the noise and sheer presence of this huge, energetic band overwhelmed them and often brought neighbors' wrath down on their heads. No less than ten people within a space of five months had offered John the use of their facilities. Every one of them, after a few experiences, withdrew his promise. Don Bosco simply had no place to gather his ragged flock.

Later, remembering Palm Sunday of 1846, when John felt his work might come to an end, he wrote: "As I looked at the crowd of children, and thought of the rich harvest they promised, I felt my heart was breaking. I was alone, without helpers. My health was shattered, and I could not tell where to gather my poor little ones anymore."

John urged them to pray, and as so often happened, his youngsters' prayers were answered. A certain Mr. Pinardi offered to rent John a piece of property located in Turin's marshy area, called the Valdocco. John, still stinging from his recent defeats, was slow to respond. Pinardi pointed out that his property contained a small hay shed which John could use for a chapel. When John saw the shed, he was bitterly disappointed. It was simply too low for him to enter. "Oh, good Father, do not worry," counseled the irrepressible Pinardi. "We will dig down and lower the shed's floor". You will celebrate here on Easter Sunday."

Pinardi was as good as his word. On Easter Sunday morning John celebrated at a humble altar surrounded by his urchins, who had jammed into the rickety shack. Pinardi's shed was no Sistine Chapel, and the young workers, no Sistine Choir. But that did not stop them from celebrating their Easter with gusto. The Oratory finally had a home. The priest did not yet know he was to pay a fearful price for his success.

### **"In My Children's Name"**

For five years, even during his graduate studies, John had dedicated his life to his youngsters. Although he met with them as a group only on Sundays, every spare moment he had during the week he gave to meeting their needs. He visited them at their jobs, found work for those laid off, nursed the sick, and assisted those who had run afoul of the law. Using every possible means, John struggled to keep his little ones out of Turin's corrupting reformatories.

But all this caught up with him when, three months after purchasing the Pinardi place, John, near exhaustion, suffered a severe pneumonia attack. At the hospital where he was taken, doctors feared for his life. Heartbroken and bewildered boys, on hearing the news, milled about the hospital courtyard, hoping for further information. Many youngsters straggled into a nearby church and prayed for this man who loved them so much.

Leadership sprang up from their ranks, and all night vigils were organized. In their youthful enthusiasm the boys hurled stern promises heavenward. More than one vowed to reform his life, say extra prayers, and do penance. Some little construction workers, whose jobs demanded they carry bricks and mortar up four or five stories of scaffolding forty or fifty times a day, fasted from solid foods. Although these children suffered pain and came near fainting, they were determined to wrestle John Bosco out of death's grip by their prayers and penances.

All their efforts, however, seemed doomed to failure. As his condition continued to worsen, John prepared to die. At his bedside, Father Borel, a close friend, bent over John and whispered: "John, these children need you. Ask God to let you stay. Please, say this prayer after me, 'Lord, if it be your good pleasure, cure me. I say this prayer in the name of my children.'"

John repeated the prayer. When he finished it, his fever broke. The pneumonia crisis had passed.

### **Welcome Home**

Two weeks later, doctors released John from the hospital. In the courtyard outside, his young friends awaited him. When Don Bosco appeared, they rushed to him, picked him up, and carried him on their shoulders through Turin's streets. Filled with joy, they sang, shouted, and cheered. Even the city's proper citizens were moved to tears. These street kids and gutter children proved their magnificent loyalty and devotion to their father.

### **Mama Margaret Arrives**

Until a short time before his illness, a wealthy noblewoman, the Marchioness of Barolo, provided John's living quarters in Turin. When the priest, absorbed in his own work, was unable to direct one of her charities, a girls' orphanage, she ordered John out of the apartment. So, when he came from the hospital, he actually had no place to lay his head.

It was no pressing problem, however, for he had decided to go to his mother's home in the farm country some twenty miles outside Turin for a period of recuperation.

When John returned to the city, the indefatigable Mr. Pinardi once more appeared and offered to rent John four rooms in an apartment of his, bordering the Oratory property. Because this particular house and its neighboring dwellings had an unsavory reputation, Bosco hesitated.

Finally, reasoning that his mother's presence would lessen suspicion of his own activities, John asked Margaret to make the painful sacrifice of leaving the farm life she loved to be a house mother in the narrow confines of a city apartment.

"Do you think it is God's will?" she asked her son. "Yes, Mother, I do," responded John. That was all Margaret needed, and in November of 1846 she gathered her poor possessions and set out with her son for the city. The two, mother and son, walked the entire twenty miles from farm to city, because they had no money for transportation.

### **A World of Young People**

Soon after John's mother arrived at the Oratory, the children dubbed her "Mama Margaret." Bosco would often say to her, "Mother, some day this whole place will be a playground, with schoolrooms, workshops; there will be helpers and a world of children."

Margaret, aware of John's natural exuberance, listened skeptically to her son. All the priest had was a piece of land of dubious value, a half-underground chapel, an apartment in a building that was contributing significantly to Turin's urban blight, and a weekend invasion of some 600 boys. But John was determined to establish a world of children, and he would build that world step by step.

He determined first of all to provide a solid practical education for his boys. Starting at ground zero, he taught the three R's. Since religious instruction was essential to his education program, John selected a simple catechism for his students' reading primer.

He first held classes in his Pinardi apartment. As more and more students came, they overflowed the tiny rooms into the chapel and the sacristy. Even this was not enough and John finally persuaded Mr. Pinardi to rent him the whole house.

The curriculum expanded. To the original three R's, John soon added geography, grammar, and drawing. He also added singing, stating that "an Oratory without singing is like a body without a soul."

To ensure a steady supply of teachers for his ever expanding school, John worked out an agreement with some of the school's more gifted students. He trained them in secondary studies, Italian, literature, Latin, French and mathematics, with the understanding that they would, in turn, teach for a period of time in the grammar school. The arrangement benefited both John and his teaching staff. Don Bosco had a fine faculty drawn from the ranks of the pupil-teachers of the Oratory itself.

The new teachers now had sufficient education to enter studies that would lead to professional careers. Thus they could break the cycle of poverty into which many of them had been born.

### **The Hive Swarms**

Within a year of settling on the Pinardi property, John had under instruction between six and seven hundred children, ranging anywhere in age from eight to eighteen. These earnest youngsters jammed every available inch of space in the Pinardi house and the chapel. John refused to turn anyone away. Yet there was simply no more room.

Undismayed, John summoned the whole Oratory one night and resolved the crisis. “When a beehive overflows,” he explained, “it swarms, and its' surplus goes out to fill another hive. And so it is with us. In playtime we are all upon one another; at chapel we are packed like herrings in a barrel. There is no room to move. Let us copy the bees and go and seek another Oratory.”

The fact that he had no money did not disturb him at all. He knew God would provide. As usual, he was right. Not one, but two Oratories soon opened in Turin.

### **The Boy Who Came to Dinner**

One cold, rainy night in May, 1847, Margaret responded to a tap on the Pinardi house door. A youngster, wet to the bone, stood trembling on the steps. Margaret immediately brought the child in, set him before a roaring fire, dried him, fed him, and then put him to bed. He turned out to be “the boy who came to dinner.” He was an orphan and his gentle knock opened a whole new door for Don Bosco. The plight of Turin’s orphaned and homeless boys weighed heavily on Don Bosco’s heart since his arrival in the city.

### **A World of Children**

Now John felt he could do something about it. It was not long before the new arrival was joined by ten other lads whom John somehow stuffed into the Pinardi house. After the winter of 1851, when he finally purchased the Pinardi house, John was able to accept some thirty boarders.

The house lived by a wondrous routine. In the morning, after a prayer together, they would depart for their workshop or factory, a little snack in their hands. At noon they would return and crowd into the kitchen for their noonday dinner, which John, the cook, had prepared and, now clad in a white apron, served them. The boys would depart for afternoon work, return in the evening for supper; then Professor Bosco would supervise their lessons.

The increased activity, however, took its toll on Mama Margaret, now in her mid 60s. She toiled all day long cleaning house, washing and mending clothes, and nursing the little boys who were ill. Boys being boys, their carelessness often caused poor Margaret much extra work. One day, fed up with her clothesline being knocked down, her vegetable garden trampled, weary from endless washing, mending and cooking, Mama Margaret announced to her son: “I’m going home.”

Don Bosco felt his mother’s anguish. He said nothing. He simply pointed to a crucifix hanging on the wall. His mother understood and her eyes filled with tears. “You are right, son; you are right,” she said softly. Mama Margaret replaced her apron.

### **Projects and Plans**

As quickly as John finished one project, he began another. In rapid succession he built a boarding home for 150 boys, a new chapel to accommodate the Oratory’s increased enrollment, and pioneered evening education and vocational schools for his future craftsmen. He built shoemaker, tailor, carpenter, bookbinder, printing and ironwork shops. Again he chose his faculty from boys who had come through the Oratory. His schools, considered among Turin’s best, took their inspiration and direction from Don Bosco himself, who ranks among modern Europe’s finest educators.

A colleague, a distinguished professor, explains why. "His love shone forth from his looks and his words so clearly, and all felt it and could not doubt it... They experienced an immense joy in his presence."

John demanded much from his teachers. At a time when schoolmasters considered whipping an indispensable tool of their trade, Don Bosco forbade any such violence. "Make yourself loved," he counseled them. "if you wish to be obeyed, be fathers, not superiors."

In John's view, the teacher's responsibility extended not simply beyond the classroom to personal conferences with the student, but to the creation of an environment at the Oratory characterized by Christian love and joy.

Bosco could make no such demands unless he himself led the way. He joined in students' recreation, challenged them in conversation, and joked with them. A superb athlete until his middle 50s, he would often footrace with them. Although plagued with varicose veins at 54, he could still outrun any of them. Bosco respected the boys' freedom and carried that respect into every aspect of the Oratory's program. If he had to punish, he was careful never to demean or embitter a child.

Don Bosco possessed great educator's skill: he combined authority with liberty, discipline with friendliness, and order with room for youthful effervescence.

"Without affection, there is no confidence," he often counseled his faculty. "Without confidence, no education."

Religion for John was no mere adjunct to education. He saw the relationship with God as the very source and foundation of all human growth and activity.

For him it was essential to present God as a loving Father to his children. He most effectively did this by being a loving father to his Oratory. He urged his students to be aware that they lived in the presence of the heavenly Father who loved them.

### **Beloved Beggar**

During the building of this huge, magnificent Shrine, Bosco was always somehow able to pay his bills. When money did not come from ordinary sources, Don Bosco was quite prepared to beg for it. His begging excursions were almost always marked by humorous incidents.

Once when Basilica bills piled high, John visited an extremely wealthy man who had been bedridden for three years. After a few moments of chatting, Don Bosco ordered the man to get his clothes, go to the bank, and withdraw the money necessary to pay the Basilica's latest bills. "I can't go to the bank," complained the sick man; "I haven't been out of bed for three years." "Promise to take your money out of the bank," Don Bosco said, "and Our Lady will take you out of bed." The man made the promise, and left his bed. John, taking no chances, accompanied him to the bank.

Many people thought John, because of his ability to raise money, was a financial wizard. He was anything but. A wealthy lady, judging him a great financier, asked him where she could best invest her money. Not saying a word, Bosco simply held out his open hands in front of her.

Although millions of dollars passed through his hands, he never kept a penny for himself. Indeed, he lived poorly, going so far as to save half sheets of letters, dyeing string black to use for his shoelaces, and saving wrapping paper and cord. He wore a cast-off military overcoat and used old army blankets on his bed. Because he considered himself a servant and a working man, he cheerfully waited on his boys at the dining table, mended their clothing, and cut their hair. Because he was a poor man, he felt hard work was his lot. He gravely warned his Salesian sons that if they should ever lose their love of poverty, it would be a sure sign that the Society "had run its course."

## **The Blessed Mother**

Bosco made many a demand on the Blessed Mother. Once a pastor requested him to give a three-day mission to prepare his people for the Feast of the Assumption. The parish, located in a farming area stricken by a terrible and lengthy drought, was suffering bitterly. The farmers were desperate.

In his opening sermon Bosco remarked “Come for these three days, make a good confession, do your best to prepare for a fervent Communion on the Feast of the Assumption, and I promise you, in Mary's name, that rain will come to refresh your parched land.”

After the sermon, the pastor, accusing Bosco of raising false hopes, was furious. He feared that the people would wreak terrible revenge on both him and John when the promised rain did not materialize.

For the next three days the farm folk jammed the church. On the Feast of the Assumption, the day of the promised event, Bosco awoke and looked into the sky. It was a cloudless blue. The early morning sun was already burning the dusty earth. As John made his way to the church for morning Mass, people crowded around him.

“Will it rain?” they demanded.

Calmly he responded, “Purify your hearts.”

The day wore on; the sky remained like a blue ceramic. As evening came and the people gathered for the last devotion for the Feast, there was still no sign of rain. As John entered the church for the final evening devotion, he looked once more to the horizon. It was cloudless - almost. A miniscule gray cloud hung like a tiny rag on the porcelain sky.

John made his way to the pulpit. Hundreds of faces turned up to him, and all had written on them the same question, “When is it going to rain?” These wondering, questioning faces could, in a short time, turn hard and bitter with disappointment.

Suddenly, yellow lightning stabbed the sky, thunder clapped, and the first heavy raindrops splattered on the roof. The farmers, with a new lease on life, broke into heavy cheers and joyful songs. Although the farmers did not realize it, the most relieved man in the district was their pastor.

## **The Last Years**

As Don Bosco grew into his 60s, his health became more and more fragile. But he continued his exhausting pace. His days were filled with teaching, counseling, and supervising his endless projects.

By the early 1880s, his Salesians had spread beyond the borders of Italy, establishing themselves in France and Spain. He yearned to visit them. Thus, when Pope Leo XIII in 1883, asked him to journey to France to beg for funds to complete the construction of the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, John cheerfully complied. He could beg for the Pope - and visit his spiritual sons.

Bosco's heart was deeply moved by the warm, enthusiastic welcome the French people gave him. They responded generously to his appeal for the Basilica.

“Never had such a crowd gathered in Paris around a priest since the visit of Pius VIII,” one eyewitness recalled. Don Rua, remembering this visit to France, said, “If we had seven secretaries, many letters every evening would still have had to be left unanswered.” The journey, however, exacted a terrible toll on John's already fragile health.

John's right eye, injured years earlier in a fall, pained constantly. Phlebitis made his walking so unsteady that two Salesians stood on either side of him. Their presence was necessary since Bosco would often fall asleep on his feet as he moved through the crowds, greeting and blessing the people.

Three years later Don Bosco made a similar trip to Spain and was greeted with the same enthusiasm. He preached in the most famous cathedrals in both France and Spain. Although he could speak both French and Spanish, he hardly possessed “an orator’s tongue.” The people, however, understood him well, for he spoke to them with the language of the heart.

### **The Final Days**

“You have burnt away your life by working to excess. Your whole constitution is like a coat worn threadbare by too much use. There is no remedy except that we hang this coat in a closet for a while.

You must completely rest.” Don Bosco had heard his doctor’s advice before. The reply was always the same: “Doctor, you know that’s the only remedy I cannot take. There’s too much work yet to be done.”

Right up until his very last days, Don Bosco, held up on either side by two Salesian companions, journeyed through Turin, visiting the poor, begging from the rich, cheering the hearts of those who were sad. He knew death was imminent. “I want to go to heaven,” he would say, “for there I shall be able to work much better for my children. On earth I can do nothing more for them.”

Bosco’s doctor now advised Salesian authorities: “He is not dying of any disease; he is like a lamp dying from want of oil.”

The famous Bosco humor-like did not fade. He advised the Salesians who carried him from place to place to “put it on the bill. I’ll settle up everything at the end.” At one time, gasping for breath, he whispered to a Salesian bending anxiously over him, “Do you know where there is a good bellows maker?” “Why?” the puzzled Salesian asked.

”Because I need a new pair of lungs, that’s why!”

The illness dragged on. Don Rua took over the government of the Salesian Society. His first command was to request every Salesian who could possibly do so to come to Turin and bid farewell to their father. From all over, these sons came. Don Bosco had taken many of these little street boys and farmers and helped them to grow with a deep love of God. One by one they passed by him to receive his blessing. Next came all the boys who had gone through the Oratory at Turin. Hundreds of them came and passed by his bed, two by two. John blessed them all, his face calm, almost young.

On the night of January 31, 1888, he turned to Don Rua and said, “Tell my children that I will be waiting for them in Paradise.” And with those words one of the nineteenth century’s most magnificent men breathed forth his strong and valiant spirit.

During his lifetime he often said he wanted to die poor. Die poor he did. On the day of his death, the Turin Oratory, with 800 mouths to feed was penniless. But that did not stop the baker from delivering his bread on schedule. The baker, like everyone else, knew that Don Bosco would find money as he always did, in heaven, to feed his boys on earth.

In 1934, Pope Pius XI canonized St. John Bosco as saint of the Catholic Church. And in 1988 Pope John Paul II called him “Father and Teacher of Youth.”

## **Chapter 2 – Don Bosco’s Madonna**

### **Introduction**

In the Salesian world, St. John Bosco’s devotion to Mary Help of Christians is proverbial. During his lifetime, miracles were performed through the intercession of our Blessed Mother. When people tended to praise him because of his work, Don Bosco’s reply was always: “Mary Help of Christians did it all. I am just her unworthy instrument.” Another of his sayings was: “The Madonna does whatever she wills.” However, Mary Help of Christians was not always the title under which Don Bosco was devoted to Mary. This brief account is an attempt to trace the growth of Don Bosco’s devotion to the Madonna.

### **Foundation for the Title “Mary Help of Christians”**

In the New Testament, one can find the foundation for the title “Mary Help of Christians.” The Blessed Virgin’s Fiat at the Annunciation is the first occasion in which Mary offered her help in the work of redemption and salvation of souls. In the Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth, Mary was a help. At the marriage feast in Cana, she was there helping. On Calvary, we find Mary faithful to her Son, who was dying for the world’s salvation. During the days between the Ascension of Our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Mary was always there as a help to the frightened apostles.

The finest of those scriptural occasions, when Mary is the Help of Christians, is on Mount Calvary. Jesus is hanging in agony on the Cross, and Mary supports Him with wonderful spiritual and motherly strength. At this time it would seem that nothing remained for Jesus to prove how much He loved us. Yet, His love found one more gift to offer us. From the Cross He turns his dying eyes to His Mother, the last treasure He had on earth. “Woman,” said Jesus to Mary, “behold your Son.” Turning to the disciple, John, He said: “Behold your Mother.” From that hour, concludes the evangelist, the disciple took her into his home. In that gift of Jesus, the holy Fathers of the church recognize three very important truths:

St. John became, in all things, the son of Mary.

On this account, all the motherly care which Mary had given Jesus was now to pass to her new son, John. In the person of John, Jesus had intended to embrace the entire human race.

“Mary,” says St. Bernadine of Siena, “by her loving participation in the mystery of the Redemption of Calvary, has truly generated in us the life of grace. In the order of salvation, we are all born of the sorrows of Mary, in the same way that we are born of the eternal love of the Father and the sufferings of his Son. In those precious moments, Mary strictly became our Mother.”

In consequence of becoming our Mother on Calvary, Mary not only received the title “Help of Christians,” but she took upon herself the functions, the authority and the obligations of that title. That Mary had understood the intention of Jesus on the Cross in this sense, and that He made her the Mother and Help of all Christians, is well proven by her actions ever since.

### **How the Title Became Reality**

In 1868 Don Bosco wrote: “Although the Virgin Most Holy has shown herself at all times the Help of Christians in all the necessities of life, nevertheless it seems she desired that her power should be felt particularly when the Church was attacked on the truths of faith and by hostile armies.” Church history shows the truth of that statement.

Outstanding manifestations of Mary's help on behalf of Christians include the following:

The victory near Lepanto against the Turkish fleet on the first Sunday of the month, October 7, 1571, during the pontificate of St. Pius V. Don Bosco, following the common tradition, attributes the origin of this Marian title to that victory.

The Moslems tried again to overrun Europe in the battle of Vienna in 1683, during the Pontificate of Innocent XI. With John Sobiesky in command of the Christian forces, the Moslems were once again turned back. After that victory, devotion to the Help of Christians spread, especially through the pious society and confraternity of that name.

When Napoleon Bonaparte had taken Pope Pius VII prisoner, prayers and supplications were offered to Mary. Pius VII was released on May 24, 1814, and, by a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on September 15, 1815, he instituted the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, to be celebrated on May 24 as a sign of his gratitude to the Mother of God, because he attributed to her his deliverance from captivity by Napoleon and his return to Rome.

### **Don Bosco's Devotion to Mary**

In Turin and in most of Piedmont, Our Lady of Consolation was a popular title and devotion. Like other Piedmontese at the time, Don Bosco followed that devotion. There was the beautiful church of Our Lady of Consolation in Turin, and, when his mother died, it was to that church that Don Bosco went and prayed to Our Lady that she would now be mother and helper at the Oratory. He then offered Mass for the repose of his mother's soul.

Don Bosco also had a special devotion to Mary as the Immaculate Conception, even before the doctrine was defined in 1854. He considered December 8, 1841, as the beginning date of his work for abandoned youth in Turin. At the age of 26 and ordained only six months, Don Bosco welcomed a young laborer of 15, Bartholomew Garelli, to join him at his Mass on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. After the Mass, Don Bosco and Bartholomew said a Hail Mary together. This was the beginning of Don Bosco's "Oratory," a unique combination of catechism, prayer and play.

In Don Bosco's famous dream of the two pillars in May of 1862, he said that upon the top of one of the pillars was a statue of Mary Immaculate, and at her feet he could read a large inscription which read "Auxilium Christianorum," that is "Help of Christians."

On his desk, Don Bosco had a small statue with a card at its feet reading "Immaculate Help of Christians."

When Don Bosco built the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, he placed a statue of Mary Immaculate atop the central dome. When Pope Pius IX granted a plenary indulgence to all who would visit that church, he said these words, "We grant a plenary indulgence to all those who shall visit the Church in Turin dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary under the title Mary Help of Christians."

From all the foregoing, it appears that Don Bosco could not get himself to give up the title "Immaculate Conception" because of all it meant to him in respect to his educational method. Therefore, he fused the two titles Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians and called Our Lady "The Immaculate Help of Christians."

## **Don Bosco's Marian Shine**

### **The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians**

The Dreams of 1844 and 1845

On the second Sunday of October 1844, Don Bosco had a dream which was a kind of continuation of the one he had at the age of nine. In the dream, the Blessed Virgin told him to lead a large group of various kinds of animals. As he walked along at the head of the animals, they gradually turned into lambs. At a certain point in the dream there was before him a lofty church. Inside the church, a white banner carried the inscription in large characters: "Hic domus mea; inde gloria mea," that is: "This is my house; from it my glory shines forth." The Blessed Virgin told Don Bosco, "You will understand everything when, with your material eyes, you will see in actual fact what you now see with the eyes of your mind."

In another dream, which Don Bosco had in 1845, the Blessed Virgin showed him a large gathering of children, a field, and then three churches in Valdocco. At the third church, the Blessed Virgin told Don Bosco, "In this place, where the glorious martyrs of Turin, Adventor, Octavius, and Solorator suffered martyrdom, and on these clods soaked and sanctified by their blood, I wish that God be honored in a very special manner." So saying, she put out her foot and thus indicated the exact spot where the martyrs had fallen.

The vast and magnificent Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, built by St. John Bosco, received its heavenly inspiration and encouragement from those dream visions of 1844 and 1845. For nineteen years, Don Bosco carried this idea in his mind and, finally, in 1863 he set to work. As a result of the directions which the Blessed Virgin had given him, he chose for his church in honor of Mary Help of Christians the actual spot of the martyrdom of Saints Adventor, Solorator, and Octavius. They were Roman soldiers who were martyred under Maximianus early in the fourth century and whose commemoration used to be on November 20.

### **How to Pay for the Church**

After the authorities had issued a permit to build the church, Don Bosco decided at once to begin the excavation. Father Angelo Savio, the financial administrator, objected, saying: "But, Don Bosco, this is no chapel. It is a huge, costly church. This morning we did not have enough money to buy even postage stamps."

"Never mind," replied Don Bosco. "We'll get started! Did we ever begin anything with money on hand? Let us leave something to Divine Providence!" Father Savio obeyed.

When the foundations of the church were laid, Don Bosco approached the contractor, Charles Buzzetti. "I want to pay you for this fine work," he said. "I don't know if it will be much, but it will be all I have." He then took out his little purse and emptied the contents into the hands of the contractor, who thought he was about to receive a handful of gold coins. The contractor's jaw dropped in dismay when he saw in his hands only eight cents. "Do not be alarmed!" Don Bosco quickly added with a smile. "The Madonna will see to the payment for her church. I am just the instrument, the cashier." And to those standing by, he concluded, "You will see!"

Meanwhile Don Bosco had a big problem, because several wealthy townspeople, who had promised generous donations, were changing their minds, while others were not going to come through until later. A bill for one thousand lire for the first two weeks of excavation was due within days.

## **Extraordinary Cures**

Don Bosco said that the cost of building the church was paid for to the last cent, and that it was all the result of graces and favors received through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. Space does not allow an account of all those favors, but two outstanding ones are recounted here:

Don Bosco was suddenly called to the bedside of a woman who had been racked for three months by fever and a persistent cough. "If I could feel even a little better," she gasped, "I'd make any sacrifice. Just to get out of bed would be a vast relief."

"What would you do for that?" asked Don Bosco.

"Whatever you say."

"Make a novena to Mary Help of Christians." "What prayers must I say?"

"For nine days say three times the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Glory Be to the Father in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, and three times the Hail, Holy Queen to the Blessed Virgin."

"Fine! And what work of mercy?"

"If you should truly feel better, make a contribution to the Church of Mary Help of Christians now being built in Valdocco."

"Most willingly, if during the novena I can leave my bed and walk about my room a little."

In the evening of the last day of the novena, Don Bosco had to have one thousand lire for wages. He called on the sick woman. A maid met him at the door and joyfully told him that her mistress had recovered completely, had taken two walks, and had been to church to thank God.

While the maid told him all this, the woman herself came to meet him. "I am cured," she exclaimed. "I've already gone to church. Here is a little something I promised. There will be more."

Don Bosco took the little package and, back at the Oratory, he found in it fifty gold napoleons worth a thousand lire.

From then on, Our Lady granted so many and such varied graces to those who contributed to the construction of her church, that one might well say that she built it herself.

Work on the church then continued, but the day came when the work had to be suspended due to lack of money. Unexpectedly, Senator Anthony Cotta called on Don Bosco one day and urged him to go ahead with the work. Some days later, Don Bosco called on the senator and found him nearly dying. "A few more minutes and I'll be gone," the senator whispered.

"Not quite," replied Don Bosco. "Our Lady still needs you here. You must live to help me build her church."

"I'd gladly do so, but my time is up. There is no longer any hope." "What would you do if Mary Help of Christians were to cure you?"

Struck by the question, the senator replied, "If I am cured, I promise your church two thousand lire monthly for six months."

"Good," Don Bosco continued, "I'm going back to the Oratory and will say so many prayers offered to Mary Help of Christians that I hope you will be cured. Have trust in her. She is called 'Virgin Most Powerful.'" He then prayed for the senator and blessed him.

Three days later, Senator Cotta returned the visit. "Here I am," he said. "To the amazement of everyone and contrary to all expectations, Our Lady has cured me. Here are the two thousand lire I promised for this month." He paid the same amount regularly for the next five months and lived three more years in fairly good health, grateful to Our Lady. The senator often brought other donations to Don Bosco remarking, "The more I support your work, the more my business prospers. God actually gives back to me, even in this life, a hundredfold for what I give for His sake."

On July 3, 1867, Don Bosco declared in the presence of some of his intimate friends: "The whole church was built by means of graces granted by Mary Help of Christians." One sixth of the cost, about one million lire in those days, was borne by the generous contributions of devout persons. The rest came from the small offerings of those who had been aided by Mary Help of Christians either in health, in business, in family matters, or in some other way. "Every stone, every ornament represents one of her graces," insisted Don Bosco. The building contractor, who had originally received only eight cents for his work, later testified that "the Church of Mary Help of Christians was paid for to the last cent!"

### **Opposition to the Title of the Church**

Not many are acquainted with the opposition that Don Bosco met in his plan to dedicate the church to Mary Help of Christians. Some persons, even at his own Oratory in Turin, wanted to dedicate it to our Lady of Mount Carmel, or to the Holy Rosary, or to the Immaculate Conception. The architect argued against the title "Help of Christians." The municipal authorities were against it also, saying that such a title was novel, vague and unpopular.

Nevertheless, Don Bosco insisted because he knew that the future of his own congregation depended upon Mary Help of Christians, just as it had needed and obtained that protection at Lepanto on October 7, 1571, at Vienna on September 12, 1683, and again at Rome on May 24, 1814, when Pope Pius VII returned to the Vatican after his imprisonment under Napoleon.

### **The Domes of the Church**

Atop the large and beautiful central dome of the church stands a massive gilt bronze statue of Mary Immaculate with her hand raised in benediction. In the interior, on the ceiling of the cupola, is a vast painting of the historical events of the emancipation of the slaves, the victory of Lepanto, the liberation of Vienna, the return of Pope Pius VII to Rome after his captivity under Napoleon Bonaparte, and finally the works and missions of Don Bosco - all proof of the protection of Mary Help of Christians to her people.

On each side of the large central dome is a smaller one. Regarding these two smaller domes, there is a curious but significant historical connection. The small dome on the left, as one looks at the church, supports an angel carrying a bronze banner on which is engraved the word "Lepanto" with the date "1571". The dome on the right supports an angel offering a crown of laurel to the Immaculate Virgin enthroned on the central dome.

### **Regarding the Angel on the Right**

The official biographer of St. John Bosco testified that he personally saw the original plan which the saint had made for that angel on the right. That original plan had that angel also carrying a bronze banner on which was inscribed an incomplete date, "19- ." The question immediately arises: "Did St. John Bosco have a vision of some great victory which Mary Help of Christians would obtain for her people in this atomic century - a victory which would be comparable to or possibly even greater than that gained over the Turks on October 7, 1571, at Lepanto?" We will probably never know for sure what Don Bosco had in mind when he drew up the original plan for the angel on the right.

### **The Painting Above the Main Altar**

The most splendid adornment in the church is the great painting above the main altar. This picture measures more than 33 square yards and is bordered with gold. Our Blessed Lady, as Help of Christians, occupies the central position. She is surrounded by symbols of God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and by the Apostles and Evangelists. This painting of Mary Help of Christians is one used by Don Bosco and the

Salesians to depict Mary in pictures and sculptures. The central portion appears on the cover of this booklet.

### **The Dedication of the Church**

June 9, 1868, was the glorious day of the consecration of the great church. It was dedicated and called the Church of Mary Help of Christians. The dedication festivities lasted nine days, and on each day a Bishop preached while another took part in the religious ceremonies.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin had become famous, and in 1911 Pope Saint Pius X gave it the crowning glory by raising it to the rank of a basilica - the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

### **Three Living Monuments**

#### **The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

In the course of time, Don Bosco began what became known as his three living monuments or memorials to Mary Help of Christians. The first is the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco always shied away from working with girls, for he believed his calling was for boys only. Then, he had a dream in which a group of girls begged him to work for them as he was working for boys. Still, he was very reluctant to do so.

It so happened that in the village of Mornese, there was a group of young women called "The Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate." They were under the guidance of Father Dominic Pestarino. Don Bosco became acquainted with the group and was very impressed by them, especially by Mary Mazzarello.

In 1871, before the beginning of the month of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco called together the members of his Council and related the following:

"Many people are continually urging me to do something for girls in the same way that we are trying, by God's grace, to do a little good for boys. If I heed my own feelings, I am not inclined to undertake this sort of apostolate. But, as these appeals have been made to me so many times by persons worthy of every consideration, I fear I may be going against the designs of Providence if I do not give the matter serious consideration. Therefore, I put the question to you, and I invite you to reflect upon it before the Lord, and to weigh the pros and cons, so that we shall be able to come to that decision which will be for the greater glory of God and the greater advantage to souls. Therefore, during this month, our prayers in common and in private shall be directed to this end: to obtain from our Lord the necessary light in this important matter."

At the end of the month of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco again called together his Council and asked the members one by one their opinion, beginning with Father Rua. All were unanimous that the time was most opportune to make provisions for the Christian education of girls, as was already being done for boys.

"Well," concluded Don Bosco, "now we can be sure that it is the will of God that we concern ourselves with girls.

And so to come to something concrete, I propose that the house which Father Pestarino is about to finish at Mornese be destined for this work."

Don Bosco then went to Rome and asked Pope Pius IX about the idea of founding a society of Sisters. The Pope said he would think about it. A few days later, Don Bosco returned to the Pope and was told the following:

“I have thought about your idea for the foundation of a religious society of women. I am persuaded that it is for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. My advice is then that they have as their principal scope the instruction and education of girls, just as the members of the Society of St. Francis of Sales do for the good of boys. They will depend on you and your successors in the same way the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul depend upon the Vincentians. Draw up the constitutions on these lines and try them out. The rest will follow.”

Don Bosco informed Father Pestarino of the Pope’s approval, and he then gave him a rough outline of the rules for the aspirants of the new congregation.

On August 5, 1872, Don Bosco was present for the reception of the habit and the religious profession of the first Salesian Sisters. He then left it on record that, from that day forward, they would be called Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

As a result of Don Bosco’s work in consolidating the new congregation, Sr. Mary Mazzarello told the Sisters, “Let us bear this well in mind: after God, we owe all to Don Bosco and his worthy and saintly sons whom He has given us for our guidance and support.”

### **The Sons of Mary**

St. John Bosco set up a second living monument in honor of Mary Help of Christians by means of a work which was, as he himself wrote, “directed to the general welfare of the Church.” Within his schools and among his boys, Don Bosco’s principal thought was always to find ecclesiastical vocations and to develop them.

For a number of years, from 1848 onward, it was difficult for boys to follow their religious vocation because either seminaries were being closed or religious orders were being suppressed; but, worst of all, compulsory military service was ruining many vocations.

One day, Don Bosco told Father Julius Barberis, “It is all very well to say times are bad, but let us hope that before long they will change for the better. Then we shall have a greater number of vocations ... Let us have courage; the harvest is great, and we have a little something with which to build up a great victorious monument.” That “little something” to which the saint referred was the Work of Mary Help of Christians for late vocations to the clerical state.

In 1875, while hearing confessions, Don Bosco found himself as though in a dream. He was presented with the register of all those who were in the house. He heard a voice say, “Do you want to know how to increase immediately the number of good priests? Have a look at that register and you will find out what is to be done.” He thought it over and went through the old admission registers. He discovered that, out of the many boys who were studying in our schools for the priesthood, not even two out of ten received the cassock. The rest had all left for various reasons. Instead, nearly all of those who came as adults - that is, eight out of ten - received the cassock and finished the seminary course in less time and with less fatigue. Don Bosco then decided to seek ways and means of cultivating these vocations.

Having petitioned Pope Pius IX about his plan for late vocations, the Pope praised and recommended this work in a brief dated May 9, 1876, and enriched it with many indulgences. Don Bosco recommended this work to the piety of the faithful even before he founded the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators. He also made good use of the words of Pope Leo XIII: “If you come across individuals who are willingly interested in this work, tell them that they are not helping you or me, but the Church.”

The following advice was left by Don Bosco to the Salesians: “Cultivate the Work of Mary Help of Christians according to the method you already know. Never refuse to accept a young man who shows

signs of a good vocation merely because you lack means. Spend all you have, even go and beg and, if after that you still find yourself without means, don't hesitate, for the Most Holy Virgin will, in some way or other, even miraculously, come to your assistance."

So clear was Our Lady's help that young men with late vocations soon became known as the Sons of Mary. In a memorandum to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Don Bosco wrote: "Upwards of two hundred young men are in residence in the one House of San Pierdarena, under the title of the Work of Mary Help of Christians. All these young men give us hope, that, with God's help, each year we may be able to send forth an expedition to the foreign missions, comprising skilled tradesmen, catechists and priests."

In 1885, concluding the narration of a dream he had regarding the extraordinary growth the Congregation had in the missions, Don Bosco said: "The Salesian Society will prosper materially, if we endeavor to support and extend the Salesian Bulletin and the Work of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians. We shall extend them. These young men are doing excellently. This work is producing splendid confreres, sound in their vocations."

"The Sons of Mary," wrote Father P. Grisar, S.J., in 1915, "are of inestimable worth in all the Salesian Mission fields because usually they are men of robust health, accustomed to hard work who, in order to follow their vocation, have, for the most part, already had to make heavy sacrifices."

### **The Archconfraternity**

The Archconfraternity of the Devout Clients of Mary Help of Christians may be regarded as the third living monument raised up by St. John Bosco in her honor and for the good of souls.

Don Bosco informed Pope Pius IX that he had in mind, "in order to foster and increase the devotion of the faithful to the Mother of God and to the Holy Eucharist, to institute in the Church of Mary Help of Christians at Turin, a pious society to be known as the Association of the Devout Clients of Mary Help of Christians. The members would have as their principal object the promotion of devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God and to the Blessed Sacrament." The Pope, in a brief dated March 16, 1869, granted rich indulgences for a period of ten years, and in the following year these were confirmed in perpetuity.

On April 18, 1869, the Archbishop of Turin approved the rules presented by Don Bosco, and declared the Association of Devout Clients of Mary Help of Christians canonically established in the Sanctuary of Valdocco.

On April 5, 1870, Pope Pius IX raised the Association of the Devout Clients of Mary Help of Christians to the dignity of an Archconfraternity.

On January 18, 1894, Pope Leo XIII granted to Father Michael Rua, the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, and to his successors, the faculty to establish in all Salesian churches and public oratories the Association of the Devout Clients of Mary Help of Christians, and to affiliate it to the Archconfraternity established in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

On February 25, 1896, Pope Leo XIII granted to the Rectors Major of the Salesians the faculty to affiliate other associations of any Church or Diocese throughout the world with the same Archconfraternity of Mary Help of Christians already established in the Basilica of Turin, under the same title and scope.

### **Blessings of Mary Help of Christians**

"Never shall I forget," wrote Father Albera, Don Bosco's second successor as Rector Major, "the impression I experienced whenever I saw our good Father give the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians to the sick. While he recited the Hail Mary and the words of the Blessing, it would seem that his face became transfigured; his eyes filled with tears and his voice trembled on his lips. It seemed to me that 'virtue went

out from him.' I marveled, not so much at the miraculous effects which followed, but rather, at the consolation to the afflicted and the healing of the sick.”

The principal place where these wonders were worked by Don Bosco's blessing in the name of Mary Help of Christians was Valdocco, especially during the month of Mary and on the occasion of the Novena and Feast of Our Lady. Also Rome, Paris, Barcelona, and other cities and towns of Italy, France and Spain witnessed the extraordinary effects of the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians given by Don Bosco.

When Pope Leo XIII's own nephew, Count Pecci, and his family were presented to him for his blessing, the Pope told them to go instead to Don Bosco and ask for his blessing. In 1867, a distinguished and wealthy gentleman from Marseilles and his wife brought their only child, who was deaf and dumb, to Pius IX in the hope that the Pope's blessing would cure the child. The Pope advised them to take the invalid to Don Bosco in Turin. So it happened that, after the blessing of Don Bosco, the child walked, heard, and spoke clearly.

When about to give the blessing, Don Bosco tried to awaken the fullest confidence in the power and goodness of the Help of Christians. He would say to boys, adults and even to church dignitaries such things as:

“Have you faith in the Help of Christians?” “Do you love Mary Help of Christians?”

“Have confidence and then leave all to the Madonna.” “Have faith, a lively faith in the Help of Christians, and she will cure you.”

“Faith can do all things.”

“Provided it is not contrary to God's greater glory, we shall most certainly obtain this grace.”

“Don't imagine you get the blessing from me, but from God, through the powerful aid of Mary Help of Christians.”

“I am but a poor instrument in the hands of God.”

In 1881, Father Daimazzo, after the unexpected cure of a cripple, remarked to Don Bosco: “Well, he is completely cured after your blessing!”

“It was the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians that cured him,” corrected Don Bosco.

“But I have given the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians many times with the same formula, and I have never been able to do anything like this.”

Don Bosco replied: “It is because you haven't faith.”

The Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, in his first letter to all the Salesians, wrote: “Let it be the special aim of every good son of Don Bosco to have a most tender and filial devotion to Mary Help of Christians.”

In his last letter to all the Salesians, Father Philip Rinaldi wrote: “How Mary loves us! How good the Madonna is to us! It is easy to see that the Madonna is always our Mother! It is she who protects our works! It is through her that our Congregation exists and prospers!”

### **Mary in the Life of Don Bosco**

Like every saint and every apostle, Don Bosco was given to the Church and to mankind by God and by Our Lady. In fact, in the life of St. John Bosco one finds the marvelous characteristic not found in the lives of many saints, devoted as they were to Mary. That characteristic is the special guidance exercised by the Mother of God in directing Don Bosco to fulfill the difficult task given to him for the salvation of souls, particularly the souls of the young.

“The Madonna does whatever she wants,” said Don Bosco to the members of his Council. “For that matter, things have been taking this extraordinary course ever since I was nine or ten years old.” He was alluding

to the first of many dreams in which he received special light from Heaven and plentiful help in spiritual matters for himself and his works.

“Mary was always my guide,” Don Bosco always repeated.

Sure of this, Father Michael Rua once told Father Vespignani, a newcomer to the Oratory: “Don't you know that Don Bosco works hand in glove with the Madonna?”

Sr. Mary Mazzarello stated on a certain occasion: “If Don Bosco says so, it is the Madonna who has spoken to him.”

For that matter, it was Don Bosco himself who confided to Bishop Costamagna: “Of all the congregations and religious orders, ours is perhaps the one that has been most favored with the word of God.”

Father Julius Barberis once spoke to Don Bosco about his dreams, mentioning those which had reference to the progress of the Congregation, and to the spreading over it of the Madonna's mantle. Don Bosco referred to several dreams of that nature. Then, he suddenly became grave and almost troubled, saying: “When I think of my responsibility, of the position I hold, it makes me tremble all over ... What an account I shall have to render to God for all the graces He confers on us for the good of our Congregation!”

In 1885, after the official communication of the appointment of Father Rua as Vicar General of the Salesian Congregation, Don Bosco spoke. He said that the Salesians owe everything to Mary, and that all our greatest events began and were fulfilled on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. He described the state of the Oratory forty-four years before, comparing it with that of the present day. He reminded the Salesians that all the blessings bestowed on us from Heaven came by means of Our Lady, and were the fruit of that first Hail Mary recited with fervor and sincerity with the boy, Bartholomew Garelli, in the church of St. Francis of Assisi on December 8, 1841. Don Bosco finished his talk by saying that our Congregation was destined for great things, and was to spread throughout the world, if the Salesians were faithful to the Rule given them by Mary Most Holy.

On December 8, 1887, the last Feast of the Immaculate Conception which Don Bosco celebrated on earth, he called Father Viglietti and told him:

“Take pen and paper and write what I dictate.” This is what he dictated: “The exact words the Immaculate Virgin said to me last night when she appeared to me: ‘It is pleasing to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary that the sons of St. Francis de Sales go to open a house in Liege in honor of the Blessed Sacrament. Here began the glories of Jesus publicly, and here they must spread these glories to all their families, and especially among the many young people who, in the various parts of the world, are and will be entrusted to their care. The day of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, 1887.’”

Here Don Bosco stopped. He cried and sobbed as he dictated. Emotion moved him even afterward. Bishop John Cagliero entered, and Don Bosco told Father Viglietti to read him the heavenly message. At the end of their conversation, Don Bosco uttered the well-known words: “Up to now we have walked on sure ground. We cannot make a mistake; it is Mary who guides us.”

Even on his deathbed, Don Bosco insisted: “The help of God and of Mary will not fail you ... I recommend devotion to Mary Help of Christians and frequent Holy Communion ... If only you knew how many souls Mary Help of Christians wishes to save through the Salesians!”

### **Spread Devotion to Mary Help of Christians**

Among Don Bosco's recommendations to the missionaries is: “Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians and to the Blessed Sacrament.” Whenever there was a danger or a special need in the Church, Don Bosco recommended to his Salesians and boys to pray to Mary Help of Christians. For example, when the subalpine Bishops were urging that public prayers be offered, in order that God might enlighten the

Pope regarding the dogmatic definition of the Immaculate Conception, prayers were immediately begun in the Oratory, for Don Bosco himself had a most ardent desire to see Mary honored with this new crown.

In the Swiss Canton of Ticino, Catholicism experienced anxious moments during the elections in 1877 and in 1886. When Don Bosco heard about it, he ordered special prayers to Mary Help of Christians.

When carnival time came, Don Bosco told the boys, "Whatever you do during this time, let it all be directed to the honor and glory of Mary. What you do for her, offer it up also in suffrage for the souls in Purgatory." On some special feast he would tell the boys, "Tomorrow you must offer a splendid present to Our Lady. Give her a soul from Purgatory. Go to Holy Communion and gain a plenary indulgence and ask Mary to have released from Purgatory the soul most pleasing to her." Whenever the boys went home for the holidays, Don Bosco would recommend devotion to Mary and complete trust in her for their spiritual and temporal needs.

During novenas, triduums, feast days and on the 24 of each month, Don Bosco always recommended that the Salesians and boys offer some special prayers to Mary, and often under the title of Help of Christians. On more than one occasion, by various expressions, Don Bosco would say: "Make Mary known, and you will see what miracles are."

Whoever reads the biography of Don Bosco cannot help but be impressed by the influence Our Lady had on his life and work. His devotion to her, the seed of which was sown by his own mother, grew apace with his age and experience. Dreams and visions and voices were always the way Our Lady directed Don Bosco.

On May 16, 1887, two days after the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome was consecrated, Don Bosco offered Mass. During it he broke down in tears several times with great emotion as it vividly came home to him how Our Lady had directed his life. Don Bosco declared, "We owe all our success to Mary... If the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians correspond faithfully to their vocations, you will be able to see for yourselves the wonders that the Mother of God will perform by their means."

As Father Peter Ricaldone, Don Bosco's fourth successor as Rector Major, wrote, "We Salesians must seek the secret of all our success in constant and filial devotion to her, whom our holy founder proclaimed to be 'The Foundress and support of our work.'"

## ***Chapter 3 – Early Fruits of the Salesians: Dominic Savio***

### **An Exceptional Meeting**

Early on the morning of the first Monday of October in 1854, a young boy is 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 if 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 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. It was early 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 town 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, hard-working, 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, Father John Zucca, of the town of Murialdo, 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 faithful.

### **Toughening Up**

Imagine a boy of ten trudging a total of twelve miles to and from school every day for a whole school year. That's what Dominic Savio did, because the school he attended was three miles away from home, and he had to go and come twice a day. On one very hot day an elderly man met the boy and asked, "Aren't you afraid to walk so far alone on this country road?"

"I'm not alone," replied Dominic. "I have my guardian angel with me at every step." "But surely you find the journey long and tiresome in this very hot weather!"

"Nothing seems tiresome or painful when you are working for a Master who pays well." "And who is your master?"

"He is God, our Creator, who rewards even a cup of cold water given for love of Him."

This long walk every day, however, took its toll on young Dominic's health. Therefore, the next year his parents decided to move from Murialdo to another village called Mondonio.

In the school at Mondonio an incident occurred which nearly cost Dominic his good reputation. One day a serious offense was committed by a certain pupil who, if discovered, would be expelled. The culprit's scheme threw all the blame on eleven-year-old Dominic Savio. Next day the class received a scolding. Dominic was singled out as a culprit who deserved to be expelled, but since it was his first offense he was to be pardoned, but never again.

The boy made no reply but stood hanging his head. However, the real guilty boy was soon discovered. Regretting his previous harsh words, the teacher asked Dominic why he had not defended himself.

His answer came slowly but simply: "I knew that the guilty fellow was already under threat of expulsion for other things, but I hoped to be forgiven since it would be my first offense. I also remembered how Our Lord had been unjustly accused."

Some months afterward, in October of 1854, the parish priest arranged the meeting between Dominic Savio and Don Bosco, and that famous conversation took place.

### **Dominic Starts at Don Bosco's School**

When he entered Don Bosco's office for the first time, Dominic noticed an ornamented placard hanging on the wall. It read, DA MIHI ANIMAS; CAETERA TOLLE.

"What's the meaning of those words, Father?"

The priest's heart leaped with joy. It was exactly what he wished. "And I longed that he would understand the meaning," wrote Don Bosco.

"That's my motto, Dominic. It means: GIVE ME SOULS; TAKE AWAY ALL ELSE."

"Ah! I understand, Father. Here the aim is not money but souls. That's what I want to do, save my soul. Help me, won't you, Father?"

At that moment the seed of a new type of holiness was sown in Dominic's soul. His would no longer remain a merely personal holiness, but it would begin to be active and communicative. The boy had begun to understand, and he would understand more and more as time went on. Meanwhile, Don Bosco patiently and prudently awaited occasions for forming his young pupil more and more.

Goodness, by its nature, is communicative. God is infinitely good, and He has communicated some of His goodness to all created things and people. In the history of humanity nothing appears so communicative as sanctity. Henri Bergson, an outstanding philosopher, studied this phenomenon and was so impressed that he asserted there is no argument which more conclusively proves the presence of God in the world than the beneficent dynamism of the saints of the Church. St. John Bosco, the teacher and guide of Dominic Savio, illustrates this truth admirably. Don Bosco was so engrafted in Christ, the Vine, that Pope Pius XI characterized him as "Union with God." Don Bosco imbibed his goodness and apostolic spirit directly from Christ, and young Dominic imbibed the same spirit through his master, Don Bosco.

### **December 8, 1854**

At the time Dominic entered the Salesian school in Turin, the whole Catholic world was awaiting the proclamation of the dogma of Our Lady's Immaculate Conception. Under Don Bosco's saintly direction the boys were keenly aware of the coming event. The atmosphere in the school was vibrating with an enthusiasm that only a very devout son of Mary, such as Don Bosco was, could arouse.

Upon Don Bosco's suggestion, in the evening of that memorable December 8, 1854, Dominic went to Our Lady's altar in the school chapel. There he offered himself, body and soul, to the Immaculate Mother of God, and he renewed the four resolutions of his first Holy Communion, especially the last, DEATH BUT NOT SIN!

"From that day onward," wrote Don Bosco, "Dominic made such evident progress in virtue that I began to write down everything I noticed about him."

### **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 if something was bothering him, if 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 in 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 that 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 gain 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 St. John 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 had decided to have a stone battle to the finish. The reason was that one boy had insulted the family of the other.

The two boys became so enraged that the only way they could think of settling the affair was to fight to the end with stones. They were to meet in the lot about a ten minute walk from the school.

Dominic Savio 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.”

### **Love for Our Lady**

Dominic had a special love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary. When in church he always knelt before her altar, begging her for the grace of keeping his heart free from every impure desire. “Mary,” he would pray, “I always want to be your son. Let me die rather than commit a single sin against chastity.”

Every Friday he found a few minutes during recreation to go to the chapel with some friends and recite the Seven Sorrows of Mary or the Litany of the Sorrowful Virgin. Not content with his own devotion to Our Lady, he was only too happy to get some schoolmate to offer her a prayer. One Saturday, for example, he invited a companion to recite Our Lady’s Vespers with him, but the lad tried to get out of it by pleading that his hands were cold. Dominic took off his own gloves and gave them to him. Another time he lent his coat to a boy to have him go to church with him for a few moments.

Dominic drew up an interesting set of stories about our Lady to tell his schoolmates and kindle their devotion. He often dropped a good hint now and then to get someone to go to confession and Communion in her honor, and he was the first to set the example.

A pleasant episode bears out his tender love for Mary. The boys of his dormitory had decided to set up a little shrine to Our Lady at their own expense so as to keep the month of May. Dominic was very excited about it, but when he found out how much it would cost, he exclaimed, “What can I do? I haven’t a cent!” Then he had an idea. He got a book he once received as a prize and, giving it to the boys, said, “Now I can do my share for Mary! Take this book and sell it!” The others were so impressed that they too got books and things and had a little raffle to pay for their project.

After they bought the decorations they began setting up the shrine, but by the eve of Mary’s feast they had not yet finished. “I’ll stay up all night to get things ready,” volunteered Dominic. But his friends knew that he was still recovering from a recent illness and made him go to bed. “All right,” he agreed, “but when you finish, wake me up. I want to be among the first to see our shrine to Mary!”

### **Dominic’s Lasting Tribute**

About ten months before his death, with a strange but sure presentiment of that approaching end, he confided to Don Bosco: “Father, I desire to do something for Mary. But I must do it at once, for I fear that should I wait, it will be too late.”

Therefore, to achieve his great desire of gaining his companions for God and of his desire to do something for Our Lady, what did he do? He created, with Don Bosco's approval, a sodality which had as its object to promote devotion to Mary, in order to obtain her protection in life and especially at death, and also to promote frequent Confession and Communion. Dominic called it the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception. On June 8, 1856, nine months before his death, Dominic had all the rules approved by Don Bosco, and the first members were enrolled. The Sodality still exists in some Salesian schools and produces great good among the students.

If we put the founding of the Immaculate Conception Sodality by Dominic Savio together with the apostolic direction that his holiness received from Don Bosco, it becomes clear that devotion to Mary, in the minds of both saints, was to be translated into the active apostolate of that motto: GIVE ME SOULS; TAKE AWAY ALL ELSE. Truly, this is real Marian devotion, for the mission of Our Blessed Mother is to bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus. Consequently the Church invokes Mary as Queen of Apostles.

### **Eucharistic Devotion**

Before going to Don Bosco's Oratory, Dominic used to go to confession and Communion once a month, as was the practice in the schools. But when he heard Don Bosco tell the boys, "If you want to keep on the path to Heaven, do three things: go to Confession regularly, receive Communion often, and choose a steady confessor to whom you can unburden your heart and whom you will not change without necessity."

Dominic observed that advice diligently. But his great love was for the Eucharist. At first he went to Confession and Communion every two weeks, then every week. Observing his spiritual progress, his confessor (Don Bosco) advised him to go to Communion three times a week and by year's end every day. Dominic placed unlimited confidence in his confessor, sometimes speaking to him of his spiritual problems even outside of Confession. No one could induce him to change confessors. But when his regular confessor advised him to go to another priest, especially during a retreat, Dominic promptly obeyed.

Dominic was a happy student. "When I am at all worried," he would say, "I go to my confessor, and he tells me what God wants me to do, because our Lord tells us that the confessor speaks as God's own voice."

Then if I want something important, I go to Communion. What else do I need to be happy?" This accounts for his deep contentment and the joy that shone through his behavior.

His preparation for Communion was thorough and devout. The night before, on going to bed, he offered a special prayer with the aspiration, "Blessed and praised every moment be the most holy and divine Sacrament!" In the morning he gave himself enough time for preparation. But his thanksgiving knew no bounds. Very often, unless he were reminded, he would forget all about breakfast and recreation and school, so intent was he in his prayer and in contemplating God's goodness.

To spend time in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament was his delight, and he made at least one visit a day, taking other boys with him. No act of devotion and respect with regard to the Blessed Sacrament was too much for Dominic Savio. If he met a priest carrying Viaticum to the sick, he at once knelt in the street, and if he had time he went with the priest to the house. Once, while it was raining and the streets were muddy, finding no dry spot, Dominic promptly knelt in a puddle. A boy who was with him objected, "You didn't have to dirty your clothes! Our Lord does not ask that much!"

"My knees and clothes belong to God and should do Him service," was the reply. "When he passes by I will gladly kneel in the mud to pay Him homage! I would even throw myself into a furnace to share in the infinite love that made Him institute this Sacrament!"

On a similar occasion, he noticed a soldier who, not wishing to dirty his trousers merely stood at attention as the Blessed Sacrament passed by. Dominic hesitated to correct him, and so he spread his handkerchief

over the dirty cobblestones and motioned to the soldier to kneel on it. Taken aback, the soldier hastily knelt on the bare street.

On the feast of Corpus Christi, Dominic was told he could dress as an altar boy and join in the parish Eucharistic procession. He went gladly, saying it was the best favor anyone could do him.

### **Favors from Heaven**

Don Bosco himself was an eyewitness to extraordinary events concerning Dominic Savio. Don Bosco 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 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.

With 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 baby sister, Catherine, was born. By the time Mr. Savio returned with a doctor the birth was over.

The women who assisted Mrs. Savio noticed she was wearing a green scapular. Not having seen it before while they were nursing her, they inquired where she 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."

### **Time is Running Out**

In the school of Don Bosco, and in all Salesian schools, a monthly Exercise For A Good Death was held. Pius IX had enriched the practice with indulgences. Dominic always carried it out with great devotion. At the end of the prayers an Our Father and Hail Mary were recited "for the one among us who shall be the first to die." One time Dominic playfully remarked, "Don't say 'for the one among us'. Just say for Dominic Savio, who will be the first among us to die."

At the end of April 1856, Dominic went to Don Bosco and asked how he should spend the month of May in honor of Our Lady.

"Do your duties carefully," said Don Bosco. "Speak of Mary to your companions every day, and behave so well that you can receive Communion every day."

"I will, Father - very carefully. Now, what favor shall I ask for?"

“Ask Our Lady for health and the favor of becoming a saint.”

“Yes, to become a saint and to die a happy death and have her help in my last moments and be taken by her to Heaven!”

Dominic showed great fervor that month. He wrote about Mary, he spoke of her, everything he did was for her—studying, singing, going to school. Every day he made sure he had some little incident about Our Lady to tell his friends.

One day a boy asked him, “What are you going to do next year if you do all this now?”

“Let me worry about that,” Dominic answered. “I’ll do all I can now. Next year, if I’m alive, I’ll tell you what I’ll do.”

Since Dominic began showing signs of failing health, Don Bosco called in several doctors. All admired his lightheartedness, bright wit and quick responses. Doctor Vallauri examined him and remarked to Don Bosco, “What a fine treasure you have in this boy!”

“But what is causing him to fail so quickly day by day?” asked Don Bosco.

“His bodily frame is weak, and his mind is developed beyond his age. He is under constant spiritual pressure. All this just eats away his strength.”

“What remedy can we use?”

“The best thing would be to let him go to Heaven because he seems so well-prepared. However, the only remedy that can prolong his life is to relieve him of his studies completely for some time and just give him little odd jobs that will not tire him.”

### **Last Days at the Oratory**

Dominic’s weakness was not such as to keep him always in bed. Some days he went to school or to the study hall, or he would do some little chores. Though his health kept becoming worse, Dominic did not want to go home, because it meant breaking off his studies and regular practices of piety.

Some months before, Don Bosco had sent him home, but he returned to the Oratory after a few days. Don Bosco admitted that he was just as sorry as Dominic that he had to go home. But the doctors had advised that he go home, and Don Bosco was determined to obey them, all the more so because he noticed of late that Dominic had contracted a persistent cough.

The boy’s father was notified, and it was arranged that Dominic should leave the Oratory on March 1, 1857. Dominic bowed to the decision, but only at a sacrifice.

“Why are you so sorry to go home?” asked Don Bosco. “You should be glad to be with your parents again.”

“I want to end my days at the Oratory,” he replied.

“You will go home for a while, and, when you are better, you can come back.” “No, Father, no! I’ll go, but I’ll never come back!”

The night before he left, he refused to budge from Don Bosco’s side, looking for all sorts of questions to ask. “What can a sick boy do to gain merit before God?”

“Offer God your sufferings.”

“Will I be able to see my parents and friends from Heaven?”

“Yes, you will be able to see everything at the Oratory and your parents. You will know everything that concerns them, and so many other wonderful things besides.”

“Can I visit them sometimes?”

“If such visits are for God’s glory, yes.”

Dominic kept asking many, many other questions like these. On the morning of his departure from the Oratory, Dominic made the Exercise For A Good Death with his companions. With great devotion he went to Confession and Communion.

He spent the rest of the morning packing and said goodbye to his friends, to one of whom he paid back two cents he owed the boy, saying, “Let’s get this fixed, so I won’t have to worry about it when I present my accounts to God.” He spoke to the boys of the Immaculate Conception Sodality, insisting that they be faithful to their promises to Mary and to place the utmost confidence in her.

Before leaving, he told Don Bosco, “Since you don’t want this poor body of mine, I’ll have to take it back to Mondonio. But it would have burdened you only a few days, and all would soon be over. But God’s will be done! If you go to Rome remember what I asked you to tell the Pope about England. Pray that I may die well. Goodbye till we meet in Heaven.”

As they approached the gate to the main road, Dominic was holding on to Don Bosco’s hand. He turned to his companions.

“Goodbye. Pray for me. We’ll see each other where we will always be with God.” Upon reaching the gate, Dominic turned back and asked Don Bosco, “Will you give me a present to remember you?”

“How about a book?”

“No, I want something better.”

“Do you want money for your trip?”

“Yes, that’s it – money for my trip to eternity. You told me once that the Pope had granted you plenary indulgences for the hour of death. Put my name among those who can gain that indulgence.”

“Gladly, my boy. You can consider yourself in that number now. I’ll put your name on the list right away.”

Dominic then walked out of the Oratory. It was two o’ clock in the afternoon of March first. He had lived there almost three years to his great joy, and to the edification of both schoolmates and superiors. He was never to return.

### **Dominic’s Final Days**

For the first four days at home Dominic was doing well and did not remain in bed. Then he became weaker, his appetite failed, and his cough became worse. Upon examination by the doctor, it was found that the boy’s illness was much worse than it seemed. Thinking that Dominic had an infection, the doctor used the accepted remedy of the time bleeding. Dominic was bled several times. He seemed to rally.

However, Dominic asked to have the priest hear his Confession and to give him Communion. This request pained his parents, but to please him they called in the pastor who confessed him and gave him Viaticum. Dominic then recalled the resolutions at his first Communion. Several times he repeated, “Jesus, Mary! Yes, you will always be my friends! I say it again and again – death but not sin!”

After four days, the doctor had good news for the parents. “Thank God,” he said. “We are past danger. The sickness is beaten. All he needs now is rest.”

They were overjoyed at the news. Dominic smiled and said, "The world is beaten. All I need now is a careful appearance before God!"

After the doctor left, without being misled by the good news, Dominic asked for the Anointing of the Sick. To please him, his parents agreed. On being anointed he prayed: "My God, forgive me my sins. I love You and I want to love You forever. May this Sacrament, which You are letting me receive in your infinite mercy, cancel all the sins I have committed by sight and hearing, by my mouth, hands, and feet. May my body and soul be sanctified by the merits of Your holy passion! Amen." Dominic's mind was so clear and his voice so loud, that one would think he was just fine.

### **Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant**

It was the night of March 9th, the last day of Dominic's life. He had been bled ten times and other remedies had been tried. He was so very weak, and the Papal Blessing was given to him. He was deeply consoled on realizing that he was receiving the Pope's blessing and a plenary indulgence. He kept repeating, "Thanks be to God!"

No one but Dominic himself could have suspected he was so close to death. An hour and a half before he died, the pastor came to see him, and, noting how calmly he rested, was surprised to hear him recommend his soul to God. The boy kept praying in long, drawn out sighs, showing how anxious he was to go swiftly to eternity. After reciting a few prayers with Dominic, the pastor turned to leave.

"Please, Father," called Dominic, "give me a little remembrance before you go."

"What remembrance can I leave you?"

"A word of comfort!"

"I know of nothing better than to recall the Passion of Christ."

"Thanks be to God!" Dominic answered.

He then opened his eyes, looked at his parents, and gasped, "Dad, it's time! Take my prayer book and read for me the prayers for a good death!"

For a while he seemed to be resting. Then slowly he awoke. Smiling, he said clearly, "Goodbye, dad, goodbye! The pastor wanted to tell me something else, but I can't remember... Oh, what a beautiful sight I see!"

This detailed account of Dominic's last days and his edifying death is not pious embellishment. The one who kept the Oratory informed, wrote Father Michael Rua, was Dominic's pastor.

### **Visions Beautiful**

Soon after his death, Dominic appeared to his distraught father. After verifying it was his son, Charles Savio said, "Oh, my dear boy! How wonderful you look! Why, I scarcely know what to say! Are you in Heaven?"

"Yes, dad, I am in Heaven."

"Will you pray for us, for mother and me?"

"Yes, I will pray for you!"

With that the vision faded.

But the most breathtaking apparition of Dominic was granted to Don Bosco on the night of December 6, 1876, nineteen years after Dominic's death. The youth appeared radiant in glory to encourage and to advise Don Bosco about the future of his work for boys. In that vision Don Bosco asked his pupil, "Dominic, what gave you the most comfort at the hour of death?"

Back came the answer: "What comforted me most at the point of death was the assistance of the powerful and loving Mother of God." Very likely that is what caused the joyful outburst, "Oh, what a beautiful sight I see."

March 5th of the Holy Year 1950 saw the glorious Beatification of Dominic Savio by Pope Pius XII. It is a curious coincidence that March 5, 1950, was the second Sunday of Lent, and it was the second Sunday of Lent, 1855, that St. John Bosco gave the boys at the Oratory where Dominic Savio was a pupil, the sermon on how easy it was to become a saint. Full recognition of Dominic Savio's holiness came on June 12, 1954. On that day, in ceremonies held at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Dominic was canonized a saint of the Church.

Popes have said that Dominic Savio is a providential patron for our youth, particularly during the dangerous years of pre-adolescence and early adolescence. If our boys and girls can be preserved and strengthened during these difficult and important years, they will more surely be preserved during their later teens. This is Dominic's unique and God-given mission for youth.

DEATH BUT NOT SIN! That was Dominic's lifelong motto. It can become the battle cry of our youth today!

## ***Chapter 4 – The Salesian Family Today***

### **The Missionary Thrust**

As a young priest, Don Bosco had applied to be a missionary; but his seminary professor 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 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 on the 11th of November, 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, the “Tierra del Fuego” (The 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 Youth Around the World Today**

There are almost 40,000 Salesian Fathers, Brothers and Sisters working around the world in 120 countries. From Sodertaije in Sweden, just 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 Rangoon, Calcutta, Cairo and around the world, they bring the care and concern of the many Salesian friends and supporters to over two million boys and girls.

Salesians, “Signs and Bearers of God’s love for young people.”

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 – in schools, youth clubs, parishes, homes for young people in need, and a great variety of activities, all geared towards helping the young to achieve happiness in this life and the next.

Salesian lifestyle is both practical and academic, with great emphasis on 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 over 30 groups, working in virtually every country in the world. To name but a few...

The Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), Brothers and Priests, one of the largest religious institutes in the Church, today work in more than 120 countries.

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

The Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB), founded by Bl. Philip Rinaldi, is a secular institute of consecrated laity, men and women, working in the spirit of Don Bosco.

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 can be found present each month in the pages of *The Salesian Bulletin*, a magazine founded by Don Bosco in 1877, published today in more than 40 worldwide editions.

## ***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 honest 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 utilized committed lay helpers 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 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 importantly, 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.

Salesian Cooperators are lay members of the Salesian Family. 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, Cooperators, as their life's circumstances allow, serve the young and others in need. Any Roman Catholic at least 18 years of age may become a Cooperator.

Salesian Cooperators in the spirit of Saint John Bosco, 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 Pope John Paul II words "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 page 85 of the "Salesian Cooperators' Regulations of Apostolic Life" which is the present Rule (updated in 1986) and approved by Rome. 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; 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, 12 July 1876

"From the very beginning of the work at the Oratory in 1841, there were enthusiastic and capable 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 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 Saviour, 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**

This Salesian Society being definitively approved by the Church can serve as a pure and firm bond for Salesian Cooperators. In fact it has as its primary purpose to work for the benefit of youth upon whom for better or worse depends the future of society. By presenting the proposal of Salesian Cooperators, we do not mean that this is the only means of providing for such a need, since there are thousands of other associations which we highly recommend for they are doing good work.

We on our part propose the Salesian Cooperators asking good Catholics, who live in the world to come to the help of the members of this Salesian Society. It is true that its membership has made a noteworthy increase but the number is far from being able to cope with the daily requests which come from various places.

In all these places, requests are made for Salesian Priests to take care of neglected youth; to open Houses or Schools, begin missions or at least support the missions that long for the coming of evangelical laborers. It is to help fill so great a need that we are looking for Cooperators.

### **Manner of Cooperation**

The same work is proposed for Salesian Cooperators as is done by the Society of St. Francis of Sales (Salesians of Don Bosco, S.D.B. and Salesians Sisters, F.M.A.) with whom they intend to associate.

To promote novenas, tridiums, retreats, pilgrimages, Catechetical Instruction, especially in those places where there is poverty both moral and material.

Since in these days there is a serious lack of vocations to the priesthood, therefore those who are in a position to help boys and young men who have the necessary moral qualities, an aptitude for study and who give some sign of being called by God, should assist them with advice and direct them to those schools and seminaries where their vocations can be guarded and receive Spiritual Direction.

To oppose bad literature by distributing good publications, books, pamphlets, papers and magazines of all kinds to families and places where it appears prudent to do so.

To initiate or support works of charity on behalf of needy children gathering them together, teaching them their religion, keeping them in touch with the Church, seeing they go to Mass and to other services, finding ways of instructing them in the Faith. These are some of the activities open to the Salesian Cooperators.

Whoever is unable to do any of these things by himself, can often do them through others, as for example, by encouraging another member of the family or a friend to volunteer.

One can cooperate by prayer or by helping with material means, when there is need, after the example of the first Christians who brought their gifts to the Apostles to be used for the benefit of widows and orphans or for other grave needs.

By this is meant to live the Beatitudes, the life of the good Christian.

Blessed are the Poor In Spirit: by thrift and sharing with the Poor.

live a chaste life in thought, word and deed.

Obedience: to the Laws of God, the Church, and the nation.

some Cooperators, because of age or some other good reason could not give financial support. These were expected to pray for God's Blessing on the Cooperator's Projects.

## **The Scope**

The fundamental scope of the Salesian Cooperators is to be of benefit to themselves by leading a life similar to that which is observed by Religious in Common Life in so far as they are able. For this reason the Association is considered in the Church as a Third Order, with this difference, that in the older Third Orders, Christian Perfection was proposed as an Exercise of Piety, while, this association however, has for its principal purpose an active life in the practice of charity toward one's neighbor and especially toward youth who are in danger of losing faith and morals.

## **Constitutions and Government**

Anyone who has completed sixteen years of age can become a Cooperator.

The association humbly requests the benevolence and protection of the Pope, the Bishops, and the Parish Priests on whom they will absolutely; depend in all things that pertain to Religion. (Canon Law)

The Superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the Superior of this Association. (Rector Major)

## **The Rules of the Association**

Don Bosco wanted the Salesians to teach the boys that Mary Help of Christians would not be pleased with us if she did not see her Divine Son come frequently into our hearts and reign over us by His grace. The first seven rules of the Association show us how St. John Bosco desired that devotion to Our Lady should lead us to Jesus. "To Jesus through Mary."

The Association of Devout Clients of Mary seeks to promote the glory of the Most Holy Mother of Our Savior, in order to merit her protection in life and particularly at the hour of death.

Spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin and love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

For this purpose, members shall endeavor by word and counsel to foster a reverent and devout celebration of the novenas, feasts and solemnities in honor of the Blessed Virgin and of the Most Holy Sacrament which take place during the year.

The members shall seek to promote to the best of their ability the following practices of piety: the distribution of good books, holy pictures, medals, diplomas; taking part in processions in honor of Mary Most Holy and the Most Holy Sacrament, and encouraging others to do the same; the practice of frequent Communion, assisting at Holy Mass, accompanying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick.

The associates shall use every means in their power to prevent blasphemy or any words harmful to religion, and to try, as far as possible, to remove any obstacle in the way of the sanctification of Sundays and the great feasts of the Church.

On the recommendation of the spiritual directors, every associate is earnestly exhorted to approach the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion every two weeks or at least once a month, and to attend daily Mass as far as their state of life permits them to do so.

In honor of the Blessed Sacrament, after their usual morning and evening prayers, they shall recite the following brief prayers: Blessed and praised every moment be the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament, and in honor of Our Lady: Mary Help of Christians, pray for us. For priests, it will be sufficient if they have the intention, when celebrating Mass, to pray for all the members of the pious association. These prayers shall serve as a link to unite all the associates with one heart and soul, to render due honor to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and to his Holy Mother, and to share in all the good works performed by the associates.

The next eight articles deal with the spiritual advantages of the associates, followed by three articles on joining the Association.

### **Particular Obligations**

The members of the Salesian Congregation will consider all Cooperators as other brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ and will consult them whenever their assistance can help to the greater glory of God and to the advantage of Souls. With the same liberty, when the need arises, the Cooperators will turn to the members of the Salesian Congregation.

Therefore all the members, as children of our heavenly Father, and brothers in Jesus Christ, will do as much as they can to promote and sustain the works of the Association with their own material means or with donations collected from charitable people.

The members have no monetary obligation, but will monthly or annually make that donation which the charity of their hearts will direct. These offerings will be used to support the works of the Association. In places where Cooperators can not constitute a Circle or Unit, and when some can not be present offerings should be sent privately in the way they find best.

### **Benefits**

The Salesian Cooperators share in all the spiritual graces and indulgences granted to the Salesian Religious except those referring to the Common Life.

They will likewise share in all Masses, prayers, novenas, triduums, retreats, sermons and catechetical instructions and all the works of charity of the Salesian Religious in any place and any part of the world

They will likewise share in all the Masses and prayers offered every day in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, imploring blessing from heaven upon their benefactors, their families and especially upon those who make some moral or material offering to support the Salesian works.

The day after the feast of St. Francis of Sales all Salesian Priests shall celebrate Holy Mass for deceased members. (This Mass is now celebrated on November 5th, on the anniversary of Mama Margaret's death.) Those who are not Priests will receive Holy Communion and pray five decades of the Rosary.

When a member falls sick let the superior be told about it promptly. He will immediately order special prayers to be said for him or her. The same will be done, at the death of any Cooperator.

### **Religious Practices**

No specific devotions are prescribed, however so that the life of the Salesian Cooperator can in some way be like that of the Salesian Religious, it is recommended:

They be modest in dress, chaste in speech, exact in the duties of their state, taking care that their dependents observe and keep holy Sundays and Days of Obligation.

Every year, they are advised to make at least a few days of Spiritual Retreat. A plenary indulgence can be gained.

The last day of the month or some other suitable day will be the occasion of making the exercise as preparing for a Happy Death, by going to Confession and Communion as if it were in reality the last of our lives.

They will try to go to Mass and Communion as often as possible and go to Confession more often than prescribed.

### **Care for Poor and Needy Children**

Today there are more than 40,000 Salesian Priests, Brothers and Sisters working in 115 countries, continuing the work of their founder. They work in 3,104 Schools, 220 Orphanages, 864 Nurseries, and 219 Hospitals or Clinics.

There are more than 615 Salesians working in the U.S.A. and Canada, in 43 Schools, 28 Youth Centers and 31 Parishes; numbering 248 Priests, 106 Brothers and 272 Sisters.

Salesians have been taught by Saint John Bosco to lead a life of Prayer, Teaching and Work, in support of the needs of the Church especially of the Young.

How can You assist them? By Prayer, by sharing your time, your skills, and your finances.

Your Bishop and Pastor have need of Volunteers!

Prayer of Blessed Phillip Rinaldi on the occasion of the Beatification ceremony of St. John Bosco in St. Peter's Basilica

That we may be devout, to the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians,  
O, St. John Bosco, pray for us.

That we may love the young as you have loved them,  
O, St. John Bosco, pray for us.  
That we may constantly work for Souls as you did,

O, St. John Bosco, pray for us.

That we May be like you ever united with God,  
O, St. John Bosco, pray for us.

***Project of Apostolic Life – Statutes***  
***Association of Salesian Cooperators***

## **Preface**

Christians have different paths offered them for living out their Baptismal faith. Some, urged by the Holy Spirit and attracted by Don Bosco, carry out the ideal of "working with him" by remaining in the world, and are called to live out the same charism as the Salesian Congregation in secular circumstances.

Right from the outset, Don Bosco thought about organizing co-helpers for his work: He invited lay people, men and women, and members of the diocesan clergy, to "cooperate" in his mission of salvation of the young, especially those who were poor and abandoned. In 1876 he clearly set out the project of life by means of the "Regulations for the Salesian Cooperators" which he himself wrote and which were then approved by the Church. Today the Salesian Cooperators are spread and work throughout the world.

The current text describes their project of apostolic life. It offers an authentic way to holiness, according to the needs of the Church and the world today. To make this a reality, the Salesian Cooperators trust in the faithfulness of God the Father who has called them.

## **Chapter 1**

### ***The Salesian Cooperator in the Church and in the World***

#### **Article 1 – The Founder: A Man Sent by God**

To contribute to the salvation of youth, "the most delicate and precious portion of human society", the Holy Spirit, through the motherly intervention of Mary, raised up St. John Bosco who founded the Society of St. Francis de Sales (1859) and, with Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872). He extended the apostolic energy of the Salesian charism by officially setting up the "Pious Union of the Salesian Cooperators", the third branch of the Family (1876), united with the Society of St. Francis de Sales also called the Salesian Society of St John Bosco or the Salesian Congregation.

The Holy Spirit formed the heart of a father and teacher in St. John Bosco, one capable of total dedication, and through him inspired an educational method permeated by the charity of the Good Shepherd.

#### **Article 2 – The Salesian Cooperators: A Specific Vocation in the Church**

1. To be committed as Salesian Cooperators is to respond to the Salesian vocation, taking on a specific way of living the Gospel and taking part in the mission of the Church. It is a freely chosen gift which qualifies one's existence.
2. Catholics of whatever cultural or social circumstance may choose this path. They feel called to a special kind of life of faith fully involved in each day's concerns. It is marked by two attitudes:
  - a. knowing God as Father and saving Love; encountering, in Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son, perfect apostle of the Father; living intimately with the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the People of God in the world;
  - b. Feeling themselves called and sent on a concrete mission, that of contributing to the salvation of youth; committing themselves in the same youthful and popular mission of Don Bosco.

#### **Article 3 – The Salesian Cooperators: Salesians in the World**

The Salesian Cooperators live out their faith in their own secular reality. Inspired by Don Bosco's apostolic project they feel themselves to be in living communion with other members of the Salesian Family. They are committed to the same youthful and popular mission as associates, brothers and sisters. They work for the good of the Church and society, in a manner adapted to their circumstances and actual possibilities.

#### **Article 4 – A Unique Vocation: Two Ways of Living It**

1. Don Bosco conceived the Association of Salesian Cooperators as being open to laity and to the secular clergy.
2. Lay Salesian Cooperators live out the commitment and the Salesian spirit in their ordinary circumstances of life and work. With lay sensitivity and characteristics they diffuse values in their own setting.

3. The Salesian Cooperator bishop, secular priest or deacon lives out his own ministry as one inspired by Don Bosco, a pre-eminent model of priestly life. Young people and ordinary settings are privileged amongst his pastoral choices.

#### **Article 5 – The Association in the Salesian Family**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators is one of the groups of the Salesian Family. Together with the Society of St Francis de Sales, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and other officially recognized groups, the Cooperator is a bearer of the common Salesian vocation and shares responsibility for the vitality of Don Bosco's project in the Church and in the world.

The Association brings to the Salesian Family the values specific to secular circumstances, and respects the identity and autonomy belonging to each group. The Cooperator lives in a particular relationship of communion with the Society of St Francis of Sales which, by the will of the Founder, has a specific role of responsibility within the Family.

#### **Article 6 – The Association in the Salesian Family**

4. In the Church, The Association of Salesian Cooperators is approved by the Apostolic See as a Public Association of the Faithful and shares in the spiritual patrimony of the Society of St. Francis of Sales.  
The members actively cooperate in its mission in the Church's name, under the authority of the Rector Major as Don Bosco's Successor, in a spirit of fidelity to their Pastors and in collaboration with other ecclesial forces.
5. The Salesian Cooperators manifest a childlike devotion to the Supreme Pontiff.
6. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is recognized as a juridical and ecclesiastical public entity. It has its headquarters in Rome.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***The Salesian Cooperators' Apostolic Commitment***

#### **Article 7 – The Witness of the Beatitudes**

The personal lifestyle of the Salesian Cooperators, marked by the spirit of the Beatitudes, commits them to an evangelization of culture and social life.

For this reason they live and witness to:

- The primacy of the spirit, the fruitfulness of suffering and non-violence as a leaven of peace and pardon;
- Freedom in obedience to God's plan, by appreciating the value and proper autonomy of the secular reality, and by involving and directing themselves especially to the service of the people;
- Evangelical poverty, administering goods entrusted to them with criteria of simplicity and sharing, in view of the common good;
- Sexuality, according to an evangelical view of chastity, marked by delicacy and a married or single celibate life of integrity and joy, based on love;

#### **Article 8 – Apostolic Commitment**

1. Salesian Cooperators carry out their apostolate through their daily tasks in the first instance. They follow Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, sent by the Father to serve all people in the world. This is why they are committed to putting into practice, in the ordinary circumstances of life, the evangelical ideal of love for God and for one's neighbour.
2. Enlivened by the Salesian spirit, they bring a privileged attention to young people wherever they are, especially to those who are poorest or victims of any kind of marginalization, exploitation and violence, to those setting out in the world of work and to those who show signs of a specific vocation.
3. They foster and defend the value of family as the basic nucleus of society and Church and are committed to building it up as "a domestic Church". Married Cooperators live their mission as spouses and parents through their marriage: "cooperators in the love of God the creator", "first and chief educators of their children", according to the pedagogy of kindness proper to the Preventive System.
4. They put the Church's Social Teachings into practice and are attentive to social communications media, promoting its correct use as a means of education.
5. They support the Church's missionary activity and foster education to a global perspective by an openness to dialogue amongst cultures.

#### **Article 9 – The Task of Christian Education**

1. The Salesian Cooperators take up the task everywhere of educating and evangelizing as Don Bosco did, in order to form "honest citizens and good Christians to be the fortunate inhabitants of heaven some day", convinced that they are always on the way to greater human and Christian maturity.

2. They share with the young the taste of the authentic values of truth, freedom, justice, the sense of the common good and of service.
3. They educate the young to encounter the Risen Christ through faith and the sacraments, so they may find their meaning of life in Him and grow as men and women renewed.
4. They are committed to helping the young develop life projects, able to encourage them to witness to their Christian and Salesian presence in the Church and society.

### **Article 10 – The Pedagogy of Kindness**

In their educational task the Salesian Cooperators:

1. Adopt Don Bosco's "Preventive System" which "is based especially on reason, religion and loving-kindness", seeks to persuade and not to impose, prevent rather than to punish.
2. Create a family environment where animating presence, personal accompaniment and group experience help in perceiving God's presence.
3. Foster what is good and educate to love for life, to responsibility, solidarity, sharing and communion.
4. Appeal to a person's inner resources and believe in the invisible action of grace. They look upon each young person with realistic optimism, convinced of the value of education and the experience of faith. Their relationship with the young is inspired by a mature and accepting love.

### **Article 11 – Typical Activities**

Salesian Cooperators are open to many kinds of apostolate. Among these they give privileged place, along with their own work and professional involvement, to:

- Christian catechesis and formation,
- Animation of youth and family groups and movements,
- Collaboration in educational and scholastic institutions,
- Social service for the poor,
- Working in social communications,
- Cooperating in pastoral ministry for vocations,
- Missionary work in general,
- Collaborating in ecumenical and religious dialogue,
- Charitable commitment to social and political service
- Developing the Association.

### **Article 12 – Structures and Ways of Working**

4. Salesian Cooperators support their own apostolate with prayer, by involving others and through material means.
5. A good part of the activities of the Salesian Cooperators takes place, in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, in structures where secular circumstances offer them the greatest hope of meaningful involvement: civil, cultural, socia-economic, political, ecclesial, Salesian.
6. The Salesian Cooperators can also carry out their apostolic commitment in works run autonomously by the Association and in initiatives which respond to the needs of the locality.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***The Salesian Cooperators in Communion and Collaboration***

#### **Article 13 – Brothers and Sisters in Don Bosco**

Their common vocation and belonging to the same Association make Salesian Cooperators spiritual brothers and sisters. "One in heart and soul", they live out fraternal communion with the characteristic bonds of Don Bosco's spirit.

They take part joyfully in the "family life" of the Association in order to know one another, exchange experiences, apostolic plans and grow together.

#### **Article 14 – Co-responsibility for the Mission**

1. Salesian Cooperators feel responsible for the common mission and carry it out according to their possibilities and abilities. Each is bound to take part in a spirit of initiative in planning, carrying out and evaluating the different activities and in choosing those responsible for fulfilling special roles in the Association.

If asked to take on positions of responsibility, they commit themselves to carrying out the tasks entrusted to them faithfully and in a spirit of service.

2. Each Salesian Cooperator supports the Association's financial autonomy responsibly and with a sense of belonging, so it can realize its mission.

#### **Article 15 – Participation in the Life of the Salesian Family**

Salesian Cooperators cultivate fraternal communion and cooperation with the other groups and members of the Salesian Family through mutual awareness and information, mutual spiritual assistance and help in formation and involvement in common apostolic tasks.

Through the Salesian Family's Advisory Councils at various levels, and other groups, they foster common research into initiatives which can enable the Salesian mission to offer a richer service to the Church.

#### **Article 16 – The Ministry of the Rector Major**

4. The Rector Major of the Society of St. Francis de Sales is Don Bosco's successor. Through the explicit will of the Founder he is the Superior of the Association and carries out the functions of Supreme Moderator within it. He is the guarantor of its fidelity to the Founders project and fosters its growth.
5. His ministry, also exercised through his Vicar or other representative, ordinarily makes use of the World Council especially in animating the entire Association and coordinating formation and apostolic initiatives.
6. The members of the Association nurture feelings of sincere affection towards the Rector Major and are faithful to his directions.

**Article 17 – Particular bonds with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

The Association of Salesian Cooperators has "a stable and secure bond" with the Society of St Francis de Sales and special charismatic ties with the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Salesian communities (SDB and FMA), provincial and local, feel themselves involved in the task desired by Don Bosco of "supporting and giving growth to" the Association, contributing to the formation of its members, making it known and promoting its Project of Apostolic Life.

**Article 18 – Links with Other Groups of the Salesian Family**

The Salesian Cooperators sense their closeness to all other groups of the Salesian Family. They are open to and foster all kinds of cooperation, especially with lay groups, respecting each one's identity and autonomy.

## **Chapter 4**

### ***The Salesian Cooperators' Salesian Spirit***

#### **Article 19 – A Precious Heritage**

Led by the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco perceived an original style of life and action, and handed it on to the members of his Family: the Salesian spirit.

The Salesian spirit is a typical evangelical experience which has its source in the heart of Christ himself. This animates the presence and action in the Church and world of the one who lives it. It is nourished by apostolic commitment and prayer, and characterizes his or her entire life, making it a witness to love.

It requires a demanding "ascetical method" lit up by a cheerful smiling face in accordance with Don Bosco's saying: "work and temperance".

#### **Article 20 – Experience of Committed Faith**

1. Salesian Cooperators welcome this spirit as a gift of the Lord to the Church and make it fruitful in accordance with their particular circumstance, lay or ministerial. Each one participates in Don Bosco's spiritual experience, lived with particular intensity by those first Cooperators among the young in the Oratory at Valdocco, and they commit themselves to living out the *Sequela Christi*, the following of Christ.
2. In the Immaculate Virgin, Help of Christians they discover the deepest elements of their vocation: Being true "cooperators of God" in the realization of his salvific plan. They turn to Mary, Help of Christians and Mother of the Good Shepherd, asking her for the strength needed to be practically involved in the salvation of the young.
3. They foster an experience in practice of ecclesial communion through the Association, which is a living part of Church.

#### **Article 21 – Apostolic Love Takes Centre Place**

1. The heart of the Salesian spirit is apostolic and pastoral charity. It makes the Father's mercy, Christ's salvific love and the power of the Holy Spirit present amongst the young. Don Bosco expressed this in his motto: "Give me souls, take away the rest". He signified this by the name "Salesians", choosing Saint Francis of Sales as patron, model of Christian humanism, apostolic dedication and kindness.
2. For Salesian Cooperators this charity is a gift of God that unites them to Him and to young people. It is inspired by Mary's motherly solicitude, which helps them in their daily witness.

#### **Article 22 – Salesian Presence in the World**

1. Salesian Cooperators feel they are "intimately linked" with the world in which they live and wherein they are called to be its light and leaven. They believe in an individual's inner resources. They share the values of their culture. They accept what is new with a Christian critical sense. They integrate "all that is good" in their life, especially if it pleases the young.

2. They adopt a constructive attitude in the face of the many challenges and difficulties amidst which they are called to work. They are committed to spreading a Christian culture of solidarity and acceptance in society.

### **Article 23 – Style of Action**

Salesian Cooperators sanctify their existence through work and daily life. They live as "good Christians and honest citizens". They are available, altruistic and generous and believe in the value of acting without selfish interests. Their activity is rooted in union with God.

### **Article 24 – Style of Relationship**

Salesian Cooperators practice the *loving-kindness* desired by Don Bosco in their relationships. They express themselves openly, warmly and joyfully, always ready to take the first step, and to accept the other with kindness, respect and patience. They give rise to relationships of trust and friendship creating a family atmosphere around them consisting of simplicity and affection. They work for peace and seek clarification and agreement in dialogue.

### **Article 25 – Style of Prayer**

1. The Salesian Cooperators are convinced that without union with Jesus Christ, they can do nothing. They call on the Spirit who enlightens and strengthens them day by day. Their prayer is simple trusting, joyful and creative, permeated by apostolic zeal and faithful to life.

To nourish their life of prayer Salesian Cooperators have recourse to spiritual helps offered by the Church, the Association and the Salesian Family. They take an active part in liturgy, seeing value in forms of popular piety that can enrich their spiritual life.

2. They reinvigorate their faith in sacramental experience. The Eucharist nourishes their apostolic charity. In Reconciliation they encounter the mercy of the Father who impresses a dynamic and constant conversion on their life and helps them grow in their ability to forgive.
3. They similarly strengthen their interior and apostolic life with moments of spirituality which are planned by the Association.

### **Article 26 – In Communion with Mary and our Saints**

1. Salesian Cooperators, like Don Bosco, nurture a childlike love for Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church and humankind. She cooperated in the salvific mission of the Saviour and today, too, she continues to be Mother and Helper of the Christian People. She is a special guide for the Salesian Family. Don Bosco entrusted the Salesian Cooperators to her so that they may receive protection and inspiration from her in their mission.
2. They turn to Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church, with particular affection. They have trusting recourse to the intercession of St. John Bosco, "Father and teacher" of the young and of all the Salesian Family.
3. Amongst the models of apostolic life, they especially venerate Saint Francis of Sales, Saint Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Mamma Margaret and the other Saints, Blesseds and Venerables of the Salesian Family.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***Belonging and Formation of the Salesian Cooperator***

#### **Article 27 – Entry into the Association**

4. The commitment to become a Salesian Cooperator demands a free, gradual, motivated and mature choice at the urging of the Holy Spirit and accompanied by those responsible for formation. The aspirant, wishing to enter and be a part of the Association, accepts an appropriate preparatory programme.
5. When the aspirant has achieved sufficient maturity in the Salesian charism, recognized as such by those responsible in the Centre, he or she presents a request for admission. However, the individual is required to have reached the age of majority.
6. Belonging to the Association begins with the personal *Promise* which expresses the will to live out one's Baptism according to the Project of Apostolic Life.

#### **Article 28 – Value of Belonging**

3. The Salesian Cooperators are aware that belonging to the Association is a privileged experience of faith and ecclesial communion. It also means that it is a vital element in sustaining their own apostolic vocation.
4. They recognize that this belonging demands concrete signs of presence and active participation in the life of the Association.

#### **Article 29 – Responsibility and Initiatives on Behalf of Formation**

1. Salesian Cooperators are the first ones responsible for their own human, Christian, Salesian and professional formation.
2. The Association fosters and sustains personal and group formation through the instrumentality of qualified Salesian Cooperators, Delegates, and other members of the Salesian Family.

#### **Article 30 – Faithfulness to Tasks Assumed**

3. To be a Salesian Cooperator is a vocation lasting an entire lifetime. With a profound sense of belonging, Salesian Cooperators know how to constantly express their witness, apostolate, and kinds of service. They are called by God to live the Salesian charism in the Association, in openness and availability also to working in initiatives fostered by other agencies, church or religious organizations.

Their fidelity is supported by the affection and solidarity of the members of the Association and of the Salesian Family.

4. To consolidate the value of belonging to the Association - and through this to the Salesian Family - the commitments of association made by means of the Promise will be confirmed according to the most appropriate manner established by the Regulations.

### **Article 31 – Leaving the Association**

3. The Salesian Cooperators who intends, by personal choice, to cease to belong to the Association, will present the Local Council with a written statement attesting to his/her decision. The Local Council will give copies of the statement to the Provincial Council.
4. The Association's decision to exclude one of its members for serious reasons is to be taken by the Provincial Council following the reasoned request of the Local Council. This is done in a spirit of charity and clarity after judging a life style which is not coherent with the fundamental duties expressed in the Statutes and Regulations, and the decision is to be communicated in writing to the one concerned.

### **Article 32 – The Promise and its Meaning**

1. The meaning and scope of the promise is to express the will to live out the baptismal option according to the Project of Apostolic Life. Don Bosco himself proposed the promise as an apostolic expression of their Salesian vocation in the world.

2. **The Promise**

*"Father, I adore you because you are so good and because you love each one of us.  
I thank You for having created and redeemed me,  
for having called me to be a part of Your Church  
and for having made Don Bosco's apostolic Family part of it.  
This Family lives for You In the service of the young  
and of ordinary people.  
Drawn by Your merciful Love,  
I want to love You in return by doing good.*

*For this reason, after preparing myself,*

***I PROMISE***

*To commit myself to living the evangelical Project of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators,  
that is:  
To be Christ's faithful disciple in the Catholic Church;  
To work in Your Kingdom, especially for the welfare and salvation of the young;  
To deepen and witness to the Salesian spirit;  
To cooperate, in Family communion, in all the apostolic initiatives of the local Church.*

*Grant me, Father, the strength of Your Spirit,  
so I may always be faithful  
to this proposal in my life,  
Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church,  
Help me and guide me. Amen".*

The current formula may be adapted according to various circumstances, so long as its contents are respected. When the promise is renewed, instead of "after preparing myself I promise", say: "I renew the promise of ..."

## **Chapter 6**

### ***Organization of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators***

#### **Article 33 – The Organization’s Motivations**

The Salesian Cooperators are called to live their vocation by being aware of the need for an appropriate organizational structure. They are organized in an Association understood as a means to help them live their project of apostolic life in a spirit of unity, according to Don Bosco's invitation.

#### **Article 34 – Flexible Organizations**

The Association, faithful to the will of its Founder, has a functional and flexible structure based on three levels: local, provincial and world.

Through such organization it aims at placing value on the efficiency of its action in a locality and its openness to the universality of communion and mission.

#### **Article 35 – Government and Animation at Local, Provincial and World Level**

For its government and animation the Association, reserved to the authority of the Rector Major normally represented by his Vicar, or by his delegate, is entrusted to Councilors who also include Religious appointed by the SDB and FMA Provincials. Legal representation of the Association is entrusted to the Coordinator of the respective Council.

#### **Article 36 – The Local Level**

1. The basic nucleus of the Association's reality is the local Centre. Ordinarily it brings together Salesian Cooperators working in a determined locality. The centre is preferably erected at an Institution of the Salesians of Don Bosco or the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
2. The Local Centres are directed collegially by a Local Council which elects a Local Coordinator from amongst its members. Each Centre has a Delegate SDB or FMA appointed by their respective provincials.
3. Men and women of good will, of other confessions, religion and culture, who sympathize with the Salesian charism, can share in the initiatives of the Local Centre and offer their collaboration as friends of Don Bosco.

#### **Article 37 – The Provincial Level**

1. The Local Centres are organized into provinces erected by the Rector Major on the recommendation of the World Council.
2. In consideration of the special bonds which link the Association to the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the provinces correspond to the respective SDB or FMA Provincials.

3. Each province has a Provincial Council elected by the Local Councils according to procedures laid down in the Regulations.
4. The Provincial Council is organized collegially, electing a Provincial Coordinator from among its members. Each Provincial Council has an SDB and FMA Delegate appointed by their respective Provincials.
5. For the animation of the Association, provinces, respecting their autonomy to govern, are organized into regions on the basis of language, culture or locality, by decision of the Rector Major in understanding with the World Council. They elect their World Councilor for the Region. The SDB and FMA Provincials concerned come to agreement over the appointment of a Regional SDB and FMA Delegate.

### **Article 38 – The World Level**

1. The World Council is made up of World Councilors elected by the Regions and the World Executive Secretariat (WES). The WES is made up of the World Coordinator, directly appointed by the Rector Major, the World Administrator and the World Secretary elected, by secret ballot, by the World Councilors, the SDB World Delegate appointed the Rector Major and the FMA World Delegate appointed by the Rector Major at the proposal of the FMA Mother General.
2. The members of the World Council remain in office for six years.
3. The directives of the World Council come into effect only after their approval by the Rector Major.

### **Article 39 – Administration of the Goods of the Association**

4. The Association of Salesian Cooperators, inasmuch as it is a public, ecclesiastical, juridical, entity, has the ability to acquire, possess, administer and alienate temporal goods, according to law. The good possessed by the Association as such are ecclesiastical goods.
5. The Rector Major with the World Council administers the goods of the Association at the world level and is the competent authority for granting local and provincial council's permission to carry out acts of extraordinary administration and alienation which do not require the intervention of the Apostolic See.
6. The Councils, through the administrators chosen from among them, see to the management of the goods of the Association. The administrator also prepares the financial report to give to the council at a higher level.

### **Article 40 – Final Dispositions**

1. The Association of Salesian Cooperators is governed by the current Statutes. Other norms are contained in the Regulations at world level or in Directories at various levels.

*The Statutes* set out the vocational identity of the Salesian Cooperator, the spirit, mission and principles for the organizational structures of the Association of Salesian Cooperators.

*The Regulations* contain the practical points which specify and regulate activity, methodology, structure and organization. The Regulations allow the Statutes, to which the document is subordinated, to be applied in practical form in the daily life of the Association.

*The Directories* are particular dispositions of the Association for adapting the Statutes and the Regulations to function concretely in the various territorial realities or specific activities. They are approved by their respective Councils and ratified by the Superior Councils in the immediate area, who have to guarantee that the Directories conform to what is set out in the Statutes and the Regulations.

2. The current Statutes may be modified at the proposal of the Supreme Moderator, the World Council or the Provincial Councils. In whichever case it is up to the Supreme Moderator of the Association to approve the proposals for modification which will be then duly published.

Proposals for modification should establish: a clear and detailed presentation of the reasons justifying the modification, the concrete aims which justify it, the principles it articulates.

The process for making the modification will be defined by the World Council under the supervision of the Rector Major.

The modification must then be approved by an absolute majority of those taking part in the World Congress, by the Supreme Moderator of the Association and by the Apostolic See.

## **Conclusion**

### **Article 41 – A Way to Holiness**

The Salesian Cooperators choose to share the evangelical way traced out by these current Statutes and Regulations.

They shape a responsible commitment on the way that leads to holiness.

With his abundant grace, may the Lord accompany all those who work in the spirit of the "da mihi animas", doing good to the young and to ordinary people.

Rome, December 08, 2006

***Project of Apostolic Life – Regulations***  
***Association of Salesian Cooperators***

## **Introduction**

The current Regulations complete the Project of Apostolic life as laid out in the Statutes of the Association. They offer guidelines and norms for putting the principles expressed by the Statutes into practice.

## **Chapter 1**

### ***The Salesian Cooperators' Apostolic Commitment in the Church and in the World***

#### **Article 1 – The Salesian Cooperators in the Church**

1. The Salesian Cooperators become part of the local Church placing themselves at the service of the parish and the diocese. Called by the Church to a ministry, they exercise it with responsibility and with an attitude of service in a Salesian style.
2. The Salesian Cooperators foster adherence to the Church's magisterium. Relationships with parish priests, priests and religious in general and other lay people, are marked by esteem, solidarity and active participation in pastoral planning, especially plans concerning youth, family and vocations.

#### **Article 2 – The Salesian Cooperators in their Socio-Cultural Reality**

1. In all walks of life Salesian Cooperators are faithful to the Gospel and to the Church's social teachings. Attentive to the signs of the times, they continue God's creative work and give witness to Christ through honesty, hard work, their consistency of life, educational mission, their serious and up-to-date professionalism, sharing of joys, sorrows and ideals, and their availability for service of their neighbour in every circumstance.
2. They aim to form a mature critical awareness in themselves in order to responsibly participate in social life in areas of culture, economy and politics. They reject everything that provokes and feeds injustice, oppression, marginalization and violence, and they work courageously to remove the causes of these.
3. They pay attention to and value the ethical dimension of culture. They keep themselves constantly up to date on developments in the communications media especially because of their impact on the formation of the young and of ordinary people.
4. According to their own capacity and possibilities, they enter into cultural and sociopolitical structures and trade unions in order to achieve the development of the common good. In conformity with the evangelical demands of freedom and justice, they work for the respecting of human rights and, as a consequence, work to heal and renew ways of thinking and acting, the laws and structures of the environments they are part of.

#### **Article 3 – The Association in Civil and Ecclesial Reality**

5. The Association is attentive to appeals from civil society for the promotion of individual integrity and basic human rights.
6. The Association courageously intervenes, following directions of the Church's magisterium, to foster a socio-political culture inspired by the Gospel, and defends human and Christian values. It inspires and stimulates its members to responsibly take up their particular tasks in society.

It makes its presence felt in apostolic associations, movements and groups, educational agencies, especially those which serve youth and family, solidarity with developing peoples and the promotion of justice and peace.

7. The Association gives particular attention to social volunteer work. It accepts formation proposals and takes part in initiatives of entities inspired by Christian principles.
8. The Association is committed to working on behalf of inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue.

#### **Article 4 – The Structures in Which it Operates**

The Salesian Cooperators promote the setting up and functioning of associations, becoming active in contexts where they find themselves; particularly:

- Civil, cultural, socio-economic and political contexts: being attentive to the education of youth and family life.
- Ecclesial contexts: offering responsible cooperation to bishops and parish priests, especially in parish communities.
- In settings animated by the Salesian Congregation, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or other Groups of the Salesian Family.
- In works run by other religious and ecclesial movements.

#### **Article 5 – Works Run Directly by the Association or by Members of the Association**

3. The Salesian Cooperators may express their apostolic commitment in works directly managed by the Association or by members of the Association. In their characteristics and purposes such works should express the spirit and charism of the Association, as will be defined in the respective Statutes.
4. The responsibility for management will always be directly tied to the local Association which promotes the activity or to the members who directly take up its management, without being a burden to higher levels of the same Association. In those situations where it is thought opportune, a process may be initiated for civil recognition in view of wider development of the work in the civil field.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***Salesian Cooperators in Communion and Collaboration***

#### **Article 6 – The Family Spirit**

1. For the growth of a sense of belonging to the Association, the Salesian Cooperators support one another by an exchange of spiritual goods.
2. They show a human and Christian solidarity in practical ways with Salesian Cooperators who are sick or in difficulties, accompanying them also with their affection and prayer.
3. In communion with Salesian Cooperators who have died and in gratitude for their life of witness, they pray for them and faithfully carry on their mission.
4. In fidelity to the Church's magisterium and its pastoral guidelines on themes such as the family, and in a spirit of Christian charity, the Association pays attention to members who suffer the consequences of separation and/or divorce. The Association accompanies them in the difficulties they encounter in their life and faith. The attitude is one of support for them in living through their situation by trusting in the infinite mercy of the Father and maintaining a tenor of life that is consistent with the fundamental duties they have accepted in the *Promise*.
5. In a spirit of family, the Association is open to religious of the Salesian Family who for valid reasons have left their institute and feel that they are still linked to the Spirit of Don Bosco. Their official entry into the Association requires a formation process appropriate to their new reality.

#### **Article 7 – Co-Responsibility in Action**

So that co-responsibility for the mission can translate into co-responsibility in action:

3. Within the Association, tasks at any level are carried out in a spirit of service according to the principles of communion, co-responsibility and cooperation.
4. In the diversity of circumstances and tasks, Salesian Cooperators bring their own specific contribution to the Association.

Each one is called to participate, in different ways, in the life of the Association:

- Young people, full of energy, come to the common mission with their sensitivity and creative capacity,
- Adults and older individuals, with their mature experience and long-standing fidelity, bring the witness of a life rooted in Christ and experienced over time: family, commitment to one's environment through one's work and culture, the exercising of social, economic and political responsibility,
- Those who are unable to carry out any activity can support the educative and apostolic activity of others by offering up their suffering and through prayer,
- Members of the diocesan clergy who are Salesian Cooperators, offer the service of their particular ministry.

**Article 8 – Economic Solidarity**

1. The sense of belonging and shared responsibility also involves the financial aspects of the Association. The Salesian Cooperators support the Association in its functioning and in exercising its mission at local, provincial, regional and world level, with financial contributions.
2. They live solidarity also by way of offerings sent to the Rector Major to support, according to the various possibilities, the world requirements of the Association, missionary initiatives and other projects linked with the Salesian mission.

**Article 9 – Particular Links with the Society of St Francis of Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

1. Relationships with SDB confreres and FMA Sisters are developed in an atmosphere of mutual trust. The animation of the Centres attached to Salesian works involves the SDB and FMA Delegates, and provincial and local religious communities in the formation of the members; this helps members to foster and give witness to the Salesian charism, especially in their lay context.
2. SDB and FMA Provincials, in cooperation with Rectors and Superiors, guarantee unity in communion and mission. They commit themselves to fostering the spiritual growth of the Centres and involve the religious communities in witnessing to values of holiness and generous service of animation.

**Article 10 – Links with Other Groups of the Salesian Family**

1. Salesian Cooperators, recognizing the common spirituality and mission which unites them with the other groups in the Salesian Family, are united with them in facing up to the pastoral challenges of the Salesian mission in the world.
2. In order to bring about communion in concrete terms with the other groups of the Salesian Family, Salesian Cooperators are called to encourage meetings, celebrations, days for formation, updating, animation, friendship and familiarity, days of prayer, retreats and days of recollection.
3. They are particularly open to cooperating with Salesian lay associations while respecting the specific identities of the latter.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***The Salesian Cooperators' Salesian Spirit***

#### **Article 11 – Style of Action**

1. Don Bosco was a practical and enterprising person, a tireless and creative worker, animated by an uninterrupted and deep interior life. The Salesian Cooperators, faithful to his spirit, and attentive to reality, are also practical. They discern the signs of the times and try to offer appropriate responses to the chief needs of young people arising out of their locality and in civil society. They do this in a spirit of initiative. They are ready to evaluate and constantly adapt their activity.
2. They accompany their action with an attitude of contemplation that urges them to seek and recognize the mystery of God's presence in daily existence and the face of Christ in their brothers and sisters. Therefore they calmly face up to the difficulties of life, its joys and sorrows, and accept the cross that is part of apostolic work.

#### **Article 12 – Spiritual Life**

1. The Salesian Cooperators nourish their interior life through participation in the sacraments, daily dialogue with the Lord and by *lectio divina*.
2. They celebrate traditional Salesian feast days.
3. They take part in the annual retreat and days of recollection made available by the Association.
4. They place value on spiritual direction, as accompaniment carried out, in particular by Salesians (religious and lay people).

## **Chapter 4**

### ***Membership and Formation Of The Salesian Cooperator***

#### **Article 13 – Entry into the Association**

1. Once the process of formation is over, the aspirant presents a written request to the Local Council for membership of the Association.
2. The Local Council then passes the aspirant's request, along with its evaluation, to the Provincial Council which arrives at a final approval on the basis of this evaluation.
3. Entry into the Association takes effect with the acceptance of the personal Promise in the name of the Association, by the Provincial Coordinator or by another member delegated by him.

#### **Article 14 – Sense of Belonging**

1. To help the growth of a sense of belonging to the Association, and to constantly nourish their vocation, the Council in each Local Centre offers the Salesian Cooperators the possibility of renewing the *Promise* annually, preferably on a Salesian feast day.
2. When a member fails to renew the promise over a period of three years, without valid cause, and distances himself/herself from the life of the Association, it is the Local Council's responsibility to evaluate the circumstances that have brought about this change of attitude.
3. The local Council has the fraternal responsibility of contacting and accompanying the Salesian Cooperator who is thus alienated, inviting him or her to a process of discernment concerning the present circumstances of his or her membership in the Association.
4. Salesian Cooperators, especially those committed to other apostolic activities or to volunteer work, bring their specific charism, spread the work of the Association and enrich the Centre through sharing their experience.

#### **Article 15 – Initiatives for Initial Formation**

1. The formation process accompanies members throughout their lifetime because the Lord always calls us through the continual development of personal and environmental circumstances.
2. To accompany the process of discernment of an aspirant, the Association offers flexible but structured formation courses whether on a personal or community basis. These include the study and analysis of some formation themes which refer to the human, Christian, ecclesial and Salesian dimensions:
  - The Word of God,
  - Documents of the Church,
  - Life and work of Don Bosco,
  - Don Bosco's Preventive System,
  - The Project of Apostolic Life of the Association,
  - Documents of the Rector Major,
  - Documents of the Association,

- Spirituality and Salesian holiness,
  - History and development of the Salesian Family charism.
3. Salesian apostolic commitment and participation in the life of the Centre form an integral part of initial formation.

### **Article 16 – Initiatives for Ongoing Formation**

5. Aware of the need for ongoing formation, Salesian Cooperators:
- Develop their own human gifts in order to better carry out their family, professional and civil responsibilities,
  - Mature in their own faith and charity, growing in union with God to make their life more evangelical and more Salesian,
  - Give time to reflection and study, to deepen their understanding of the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Church, their knowledge of Don Bosco, and Salesian documents,
  - Qualify themselves for the apostolate and service to which they have been called.
6. The following initiatives are particularly formative:
- Regular meetings, at least monthly, according to the demands of life and apostolate of the members of the Centre and other kinds of meetings possibly open to the locality and to civil society,
  - Intense occasions for prayer and discernment,
  - Contacts with Groups of the Salesian Family at all levels,
  - Better understanding of formation materials from the Salesian Family, with preferential attention given to the Salesian Bulletin.
7. The Association's planning and review meetings at local, provincial, regional and world levels, are initiatives with special relevance for formation, as well as those on specific themes with and by other branches of the Salesian Family.

Participation in such initiatives, promoted at higher levels in the Association, by those responsible and/or by representatives of Local Centres, should be properly prepared, and the fruits thereof shared with members of the Centre.

8. The Association is committed to using the many social communications media and new technologies for collaborating in cultural dialogue, for fostering the development of critical sense and for developing formation programmes that can be made accessible in many ways.

### **Article 17 – Formation to the Services of Responsibility**

1. The service of animation and responsibility in the Association is a service of apostolate through which the Association grows and matures in communion, in spiritual life and in the Salesian mission. All Salesian Cooperators may be asked to offer their resources and abilities for a determined period of time in the service of animation and responsibility.
2. The Salesian Cooperator willingly accepts being available for a period of service asked of him or her, carries it out with discernment, takes on the specific formation needed as preparation for the task, according to programmes established by the Association.

At the end of their term of service they give witness to their sense of belonging by an attitude of simple availability to the Association.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***Organization Of The Association***

#### **Article 18 – Local Centres and their Coordination at Provincial Level**

1. Local Centres are ordinarily formed with a minimum group of six members living and working in a determined locality. They are organized at provincial level as soon as possible and with an appropriate number, at least three Centres.
2. Local Centres may also form into groups of specific interests and roles, always followed up and animated by the local Council. It is appropriate that one of their members be a part of the Council.
3. Members living in an area where there is no Local Centre are joined to the nearest one. This Centre keeps contact with them and helps them to be involved in activities.
4. The Association is open to the possibility of setting up Centres of Salesian Cooperators wherever the Salesian mission requests it, in ways defined by the Provincial Council.
5. Members committed to a Salesian apostolic and educational work or centre can start a Salesian Cooperators Centre in relation to that work.

These Centres will make sure that the lay people in that work will come in contact with the Association.

6. Salesian Cooperators in extraordinary circumstances, who do not have the possibility of having reference to a Local Centre, will be in direct contact with the Provincial Council; the mode of this contact will be decided by the Council, which could include modern communications technology.
7. At provincial level and in the locality of reference, the Provincial is recognized as the one who represents the Rector Major through services of animation, charismatic guidance and promotion of the Salesian Family.
8. The Rector Major, with the consent of the Superior General of the FMA, delegates the service of animation, guidance and promotion of Centres, erected as part of communities of the FMA, to the FMA Provincial of reference.
9. When an SDB or FMA Institution which was the point of reference for a Local Centre of the Association is suppressed, the Local Centre is bound to guarantee the Salesian presence in the locality, working in strict understanding with the local Church and with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop.

The SDB and FMA Provincials will agree on those responsible in the Local Centre for solutions to possible animation and organizational problems as a result of suppression of the work, and they will make sure of the necessary spiritual animation by appointing an SDB or FMA delegate.

10. When the Local Centres are erected as part of a nearby SDB and FMA Institution, it is only right that relationships of understanding and cooperation be established which are appropriate for those who recognize themselves as sharing the same mission and common spirit, and which, at the same time, will respect the autonomy of each Centre.

### **Article 19 – The Local Council**

1. The Association at the local level is governed by a Council in the collegial fashion.
2. The Local Council is made up of members elected by the Salesian Cooperators of the Local Centre. It is made up of an appropriate number of Councilors - ordinarily from three to seven but not beyond a third of the total members of the Centre - and of an SDB or FMA delegate with active voice.
3. The elected Councilors remain in office for three years and can be re-elected for only one further three-year term.

### **Article 20 – Main Duties and Roles of the Local Council**

1. To ensure the functioning of the association with respect to its apostolic commitments, in communion with the Provincial Council, the principle tasks are:
  - To plan, promote and coordinate the formation and apostolic initiatives of the members,
  - To ensure links of union with the Salesian Congregation, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the other Groups of the Salesian Family,
  - To decide on calling an Assembly,
  - To see to the administration of the goods of the Association,
  - To accompany the aspirants in finding their place in the Centre and prepare their formation journey, in understanding with the Provincial Council,
  - To make the professional abilities and spiritual riches of all the members fruitful for the good of the Association, valuing their differences and constructively directing them to the gift of unity,
  - Animating initiatives which support the vocational faithfulness of the members and their active participation in the life of the Centre.

The annual renewal of the *Promise* will be an appropriate occasion for the celebration of this journey to fidelity.

2. Each Local Council will elect from amongst elected members:
  - A Coordinator who may choose a vice coordinator from amongst the Councilors.
  - An Administrator,
  - A Secretary.

Each Council designates a person in charge of Formation from amongst the members of the Council: in case such a person is lacking, the Coordinator takes on the role.

3. It is also the role of the Local Council:
  - To determine the areas of coordination pertaining to formation and mission in the Association,
  - To spread and make known the spirituality of Don Bosco,
  - To propose the vocation of the Salesian Cooperators by planning and putting into effect any initiatives for receiving aspirants,
  - To make a decision with regard to the acceptance of the aspirant, which is then passed on to the Provincial Council,
  - To evaluate collegially all initiatives proposed and carried out by members,
  - To adopt other initiatives which promote the best functioning of the Centre with regard to what is laid down in the Project of Apostolic Life of the Association.

## **Article 21 – Tasks and Roles within the Local Council**

There are various roles entrusted to the Councilors who take on responsibility for government within the Council.

1. It is up to the local Coordinator to:
  - Call meetings, preside over them, coordinate the work, see that resolutions are carried out, etc.
  - Inform higher bodies on the life and activities of the Association,
  - Represent the Association and maintain relationships, in the name of the Council, with lay and ecclesiastical organizations and with the other Groups of the Salesian Family,
  - Take part in the Provincial Salesian Family Advisory Council,
  - Take decisions in urgent cases, provided they are within the competence of the Council, making appropriate note of these afterwards,
  - Call elections for the renewal of the Council, preparing evaluation reports at the end of each triennium, and carefully attend to the handing on of matters between the outgoing and incoming Councils,
  - Maintain and develop programmes and initiatives in the Centre proposed by the Provincial Council,
  - Presenting the Provincial Council with requests for admission to the Association, accompanied by the opinion of the local Council and other necessary information.
  
2. It is up to the local Administrator to:
  - Safeguard the goods belonging to the Association,
  - Stimulate financial solidarity amongst members,
  - Promote initiatives for financing the various planned initiatives,
  - Suggest possibilities for financial resources and financial assistance,
  - Promote solidarity funds to subsidize the more precarious activities of the Association,
  - Keep the accounts and ledgers up to date,
  - Present the budget and final balance to the Local Council,
  - Present the financial accounts to the Provincial Council.
  
3. It is up to the Secretary to:
  - Keep the written minutes of meetings,
  - Support the Coordinator in the management of juridical acts with the Church and civil society,
  - See that archival documentation belonging to the Council is kept up to date,
  - From time to time update necessary data for the Provincial Council.
  
4. It is up to the one in charge of Formation, in understanding with the Provincial Council, to:
  - Prepare the formation programme for the aspirants,
  - Prepare the annual programme for ongoing formation,
  - See to and follow up all specific aspects of formation.

## **Article 22 – Delegates**

1. The SDB and FMA Provincials, through their Delegates, animate the Centres set up as part of their Institutions or linked to their Provinces.
  
2. Each local Council has its local Delegate. Each Provincial Council has its Provincial Delegate and each World Council has its World Delegate. These are spiritual animators responsible above all for Salesian apostolic formation. According to the norms of the current Regulations, they are members of the respective Councils by right.

3. SDB and FMA Delegates at local and provincial levels are appointed by their respective Provincials, after hearing the opinion of the members of the respective Council and bearing in mind as much as possible the needs of the Centres.
4. If the Local Centre is not erected as part of an SDB or FMA Institution, the Provincial can appoint a suitably prepared Salesian Cooperator or another member of the Salesian Family as Local Delegate.
5. A Delegate, where necessary or opportune, can be in charge of more than one Local Centre.

### **Article 23 – Specific Tasks of Delegates**

1. They stimulate Councils' responsibility and cooperation in experiencing organizational autonomy, in charismatic communion with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
2. They offer their service as spiritual, educational and pastoral guides in order to support a more effective apostolate on behalf of young people.
3. Provincial Delegates animate Local Delegates to help them take responsibility for their tasks of spiritual animation of the Salesian Cooperators and co-responsibility in their Salesian apostolic formation.
4. Provincial Delegates, in understanding with the regional and world Delegates, foster updating and formation activities for all the Delegates of the Province; these will be open to all those responsible for the Association, as well as activities on the Salesian charismatic dimension with specific reference to their role of spiritual animation.

### **Article 24 – Organization Of The Province And The Provincial Councils**

1. The Local Centres of a determined locality - established by the Rector Major with the World Council - constitute a Province.
2. At provincial level the Association is governed in a collegial fashion by a Provincial Council.
3. The Provincial Council is made up of members elected by the Councilors of the Local Centres. It comprises an appropriate number of Councilors - from four to twelve - as well as the Provincial SDB Delegate and the Provincial FMA Delegate with active voice.
4. Each Provincial Council elects from amongst its lay members:
  - A Coordinator who can choose a vice-coordinator from amongst the Councilors,
  - An Administrator,
  - A Secretary,
  - One who will be in charge of Formation.

The elected Provincial Councilors remain in office for three years and may be re-elected, without interruption, for a further three-year period.

### **Article 25 – Principal Roles and Tasks of the Provincial Council**

1. To ensure the functioning of the Association with respect to its apostolic commitments, in communion with the World Council, the principal tasks are to:

- Plan, promote and coordinate the formation and apostolic initiatives of the members,
- Promote cooperation amongst Local Centres meeting with them and supporting the commitments of the Local Councils themselves,
- Establish courses for initial and ongoing formation with the Local Councils, according to guidelines indicated by the Association,
- Accept an Aspirant after hearing the proposal and opinion of the Local Council and requesting the documents from the WES (World Executive Secretariat),
- Pronounce the collegial act of a dismissal,
- Ensure particular bonds with the Society of St. Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,
- Give an opinion on the appointment of the Provincial Delegate,
- Promote important occasions for spiritual growth and retreats,
- See to and animate initiatives which encourage vocational fidelity of the members and an active participation in the life of the Association,
- Receive and examine the financial accounts of economic management of the Local Centres,
- Approve the financial accounts of its own economic management,
- Convoke and organize Provincial Congresses,
- Take part in the initiatives of the Regional Advisory Council,
- See to the administration of the goods of the Association.

### **Article 26 – Tasks and Roles within the Provincial Council**

There are many tasks entrusted to the Councilors who take on responsibilities of government within the Council.

1. It is up to the Provincial Coordinator to:

- Represent the Association and maintain relationships, in the name of the Council, with lay and ecclesiastical organizations and with the other Groups of the Salesian Family,
- Take decisions in urgent cases, provided they are within the competence of the Provincial Council, making subsequent note of them,
- Call meetings, preside over them, coordinate the work, and see that resolutions are implemented,
- Call the elections for the renewal of the Council, prepare evaluation reports at the end of each triennium, and take care to hand on matters from the outgoing Council to the incoming one.
- Accompany Cooperators who are prevented from having regular contact with them, in agreement with those responsible for the Local Centre,
- Cooperate with the World Councilor of the Region by fostering initiatives and informing him or her on the life and activities of the Association,
- Take an active part in the Provincial Advisory Council of the Salesian Family.

2. It is up to the Administrator to:

- Safeguard the goods belonging to the Association,
- Animate the financial solidarity of the Local Centres,
- Suggest likely financial resources and assistance,
- Promote solidarity funds to subsidize the more precarious activities of the Association,
- Keep the accounts and ledgers up to date,
- Present the budget and final balance to the Provincial Council,
- Present the annual financial accounts to the World Council.

3. It is up to the Provincial Secretary to:

- Keep the written minutes of meetings,
- Support the Coordinator in the management of juridical acts with the Church and civil society,
- See to the updating of archival documentation belonging to the Council,

- From time to time pass on updated data to the World Council.
4. It is up to the one in charge of Formation to:
- Draw up a formation plan for the aspirants with the agreement of those responsible at local level for formation,
  - Draw up programmes for ongoing formation at provincial level,
  - See to and follow up all specific aspects of formation in the province.

### **Article 27 – Specific Tasks of the Provincial Council**

1. It is the task of the Provincial Council to erect and suppress local centres by means of a Decree signed by the Provincial Coordinator, with the consent of the SDB or FMA Provincial.

To erect or suppress a Local Centre away from SDB or FMA institution the written consent of the diocesan bishop is required.

2. The fusion of a Local Centre at an FMA institution with a Local Centre at an SDB institution, or vice versa, comes about through the collegial act of the Provincial Council, after hearing the respective Local Councils, with the consent of the competent SDB/FMA Provincials, by means of Decree from the Coordinator of the same Provincial Council. The new Local Centre takes over the financial situation of the two previous Local Centres, unless otherwise indicated in the Decree of fusion.
3. The Provincial Council decides on the modality for setting up Centres of Salesian Cooperators wherever the Salesian mission requires it.
4. The Provincial Congress comprises the Provincial Councilors and the Councils of the Local Centres. Its principal tasks are as follows:
- To establish guidelines and concrete indications for the Provincial Council in the fields of formation, mission and organization at provincial level,
  - To evaluate the progress of the Association in the province,
  - To elect the Provincial Council.

The Provincial Congress is convoked by the Provincial Coordinator at least every three years on the occasion of the renewal of the Provincial Councilors.

### **Article 28 – The Regional Advisory Council**

1. Nations or geographical areas with more than one province of the same language and culture can, with the consent of the Rector Major, constitute a Regional Advisory Council.
2. The Regional Advisory Councils, as bodies for coordination and animation, have as their purpose a more effective cooperation between Provincial Councils and the World Council. Each Advisory Council is a place to address issues and communicate them, to share plans for apostolate and formation for the benefit of the entire Region.
3. The Regional Advisory Council is made up of: the World Councilor for the Region, who presides; the provincial coordinators; the SDB and FMA delegates and others responsible for various sectors (formation, administration, secretariat), according to what has been established by the Directory of the Same Advisory Council.

4. The SDB and FMA Delegates for the Advisory Council are appointed by the respective Provincials.
5. The procedures for meetings, organization and coordination of the Regional Advisory Council and for the Regional Congress are laid down in the Directory.

### **Article 29 – The Regional Congress**

1. The Regional Congress is composed of all the members of the Provincial Councils of a Region and of the members of the Regional Consulta, if one is established.
2. The Regional Congress is convoked by the World Council by mandate to the World Councilor of the Region.
3. The Regional Congress can be an elective one or one that deepens particular topics for the development of the Salesian charism and of the Association.

The tasks of the Regional Congress are to:

- Draw up the Regulations of the Congress and present them for the approval of the World Council,
- Elect the new World Councilor for the Region according to the modalities approved by the Rector Major, taking into consideration that the Religious members who are voting do not supersede one-third of the total Assembly of those who have the right to vote,
- Verify periodically that state of the Association in the Region and its operational directives,

### **Article 30 – The Ministry of the Rector Major**

In exercising his ministry, personally or through his Vicar or other representative, the Rector Major ordinarily avails himself of the World Council of Salesian Cooperators, especially in animating the entire Association and coordinating its formation and apostolic initiatives.

### **Article 31 – The World Council**

1. To achieve the essential aims of the Project of Apostolic Life, and for a more effective vitality and internal cooperation, the Rector Major makes use of a Council at world level.
2. The World Council collaborates with the Rector Major and his Vicar in the government and animation of the Association: It provides general guidelines with respect to formation, apostolic, organizational and administrative initiatives entrusted to the animation of World Councilors.
3. The World Council is made up of :
  - The World Coordinator,
  - The World Administrator,
  - The World Secretary,
  - The World SDB Delegate,
  - The World FMA Delegate, representing the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the Salesian Cooperators in their institutions,
  - The World Regional Councilors for each region elected by their respective regional congresses.
4. The tasks of the World Council are:

- To foster links between the Regions and the Rector Major,
  - To know the actual situations of the different Regions and present them to the Rector Major,
  - To provide the Rector Major with opportune and useful information for the adopting of decisions and guidelines,
  - To guide and promote the practical application of decisions and guidelines for the Association that comes from the Rector Major.
5. The specific roles of the World Councilors are defined by the Council *in sede* at its first meeting where the Coordinator is appointed, in respect to and according to the directives of the Project of Apostolic Life and by adopting a specific Directory.
- The modes of participation of Councilors at meetings of the World Council are also laid down in this Directory.
6. The World Council approves the Directories drawn up by the competent bodies at Regional and Provincial levels.
7. The World Council presents the Rector Major with the procedures by which each Region elects its World Councilor. These procedures can also be conducted by correspondence.
8. The World Council guarantees animation at the world level by appropriate communication tools in the Association's main languages.

### **Article 32 – The Functioning of the World Council**

1. So that its activity is smooth and functional, the World Council makes use of a World Executive Secretariat (WES), made up of the World Coordinator, the World Council Secretary, the World Council Administrator, the World SDB and FMA Delegates.
2. For the appointment of the World Coordinator, the World Regional Councilors, the World SDB and FMA Delegates, the World Council offers the Rector Major a list of three names which may also come from outside the Council.

A secret ballot elects the World Administrator and World Secretary, who may also be chosen from outside the Council. In the case of members of the Council being elected, the second of those elected from the Regions they belong to will take up the role of World Councilor.

3. All elected members of the World Council remain in office for six years, and ordinarily will not be elected for a second consecutive period of six years.
4. The directives of the World Council come into force after their approval by the Rector Major.
5. World Councilors and Delegates emeriti may be invited to work with the Council but without the right to vote.

### **Article 33 – The World Congress**

1. The World Congress is the highest expression of representation in the Association. It gathers Salesian Cooperators from all Regions, in unity and communion with the Rector Major, according to already criteria of participation and modality already defined, from time to time, on the basis of the specific reasons for the Congress.

The World Congress exists mainly to:

- Approve modifications to the Project of Apostolic Life,
  - Deal with themes of specific interest at world level,
  - Establish working guidelines on the themes proposed for the day's agenda,
  - Celebrate especially important moments in the life and history of the Association and the Church.
2. It is up to the Rector Major, following a proposal from the World Council, to determine the theme, the place and the participants for ordinary and extraordinary World Congresses, entrusting their organization to the World Executive Secretariat (WES).

### **Article 34 – Administration of the Goods of the Association**

The Rector Major with the World Council administers the goods of the Association at the world level.

He is the competent authority for granting permission to local and provincial councils to carry out acts of extraordinary administration and alienation, which do not require the intervention of the Apostolic See, taking into account the dispositions of Article 39 of the Statutes.

### **Article 35 – Final Dispositions**

1. The Salesian Cooperators are bound to respect and implement the current Regulations.
2. So that the principles and prescriptions contained herein may be made flexible and adaptable to local situations of the Association, the structures of animation and government set out in the current Regulations can have appropriate Directories, which integrate and/or apply specific aspects of the Regulations regarding the government and animation of the Centres.

Each Directory is subject to the judgment of the competent Council (local/provincial) which accepts it by absolute majority of those with the right to vote, and presents it to the immediately superior Council for definitive approval.

In the case of the Regional Advisory Councils, the Directories will be set out by the Regional Congress and presented to the World Council for definitive approval. The same process is applied for approval of modifications to the various Directories

3. The current Regulations may be modified at the initiative of the Supreme Moderator (Rector Major) of the Association, the World Council or the Provincial Councils. In whichever case, it is up to the Supreme Moderator of the Association to approve the initiatives for modification, which will be then duly published.
4. Proposals for a modification should:
- Offer a clear and detailed presentation of the reasons justifying the modification,
  - Define the concrete aims of such modification,
  - Indicate the principles it articulates.

The process for making the modification is determined by the World Council under the supervision of the Rector Major. The proposal for modification must then be approved by an absolute majority of those taking part in the World Congress, and by the Supreme Moderator of the Association.

***Plenary & Partial Indulgences***

## **Plenary Indulgences**

The *Plenary Indulgences* granted to the Association of Salesian Cooperators, after the revision made by the Holy See by the decree of 31 January 1968, are the following:

1. On the day of becoming a member
2. Feast of St. Francis de Sales: 24 January
3. Feast of St. John Bosco: 31 January
4. Feast of St. Joseph: 19 March
5. Feast of St. Dominic Savio: 6 May
6. Feast of St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello: 13 May
7. Feast of St. Mary Help of Christians: 24 May
8. Feast of the Immaculate Conception : 8 December

*Condition for gaining the Plenary Indulgences:*

1. Confession, Communion and prayers for the Pope's intentions.
2. Renewal, at least privately, of the promise to observe faithfully the Regulations.

N.B. If the above feasts are celebrated externally on some other day, the Cooperators may gain the Indulgence either on the day of the liturgical feast or on the day of the external solemnity.

Cooperators can naturally gain other Plenary Indulgences granted to all the faithful by fulfilling only the first of the two conditions, i.e. without renewing the promise to observe the Regulations.

## **Partial Indulgences**

The numerous partial indulgences expressly granted in the past to the Pious Union have not been renewed; but Cooperators should try to gain those which are extended to all the faithful. It should be remembered in this connection that partial indulgences are no longer specified as so many days, months or years as in the past. When it is stated that to some action a partial indulgence is attached, this means:

“Properly disposed faithful who perform an action to which a partial indulgence is attached obtain, in addition to the remission of temporal punishment acquired by the action itself, an equal remission of punishment through the intervention of the Church.”

In addition to the partial indulgences attached to pious practices, three general concessions should be mentioned which relate to acts of *piety, charity, and penance,*

1. A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who with some kind of prayer raise their minds to God with humble confidence, while carrying out their duties and bearing the difficulties of everyday life.
2. A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who, motivated by the spirit of faith and compassion, give of themselves or their goods for the service of persons in need.
3. A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who, in a spirit of penance, spontaneously refrain from the enjoyment of things which are lawful and pleasing to them.

**Benefits**

The Salesian Cooperators share in all the spiritual graces and indulgences granted to the Salesian Religious except those referring to the Common Life.

They will likewise share in all Masses, prayers, novenas, triduums, retreats, sermons and catechetical instructions and all the works of charity of the Salesian Religious in any place and any part of the world

They will likewise share in all the Masses and prayers offered every day in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, imploring blessing from heaven upon their benefactors, their families and especially upon those who make some moral or material offering to support the Salesian works.

The day after the feast of St. Francis of Sales all Salesian Priests shall celebrate Holy Mass for deceased members. (This Mass is now celebrated on November 5th, on the anniversary of Mama Margaret's death.) Those who are not Priests will receive Holy Communion and pray five decades of the Rosary.

When a member falls sick let the superior be told about it promptly. He will immediately order special prayers to be said for him or her. The same will be done, at the death of any Cooperator.

**Salesian Calendar**

January 15	Blessed Louis Variara, Priest, missionary among the lepers of Colombia
January 23	Blessed Laura Vicuña, Youth, pupil of the Salesian Sisters [in Canada, January 22]
January 24	St. Francis de Sales, Bishop and Doctor, titular saint of the Salesian Society (Society of St. Francis de Sales)
January 30	Blessed Bronislaus Markiewicz, Priest, founder of the Michaelite congregations
January 31	St. John Bosco, Priest, founder of the Salesian Society, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Salesian Cooperators.
February 1	Commemoration of all deceased Salesians (SDBs)
February 7	Blessed Pius IX, Pope, supporter of St. John Bosco in the founding of the Salesians
February 9	Blessed Eusebia Palomino Yenes, Virgin
February 25	Sts. Louis Versiglia (Bishop) and Callistus Caravario (Priest), martyred in China
March 19	St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church
May 6	St. Dominic Savio, Youth
May 13	St. Mary Domenica Mazzarello, Virgin, co-foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
May 16	St. Louis Orione, Priest, founder of the Sons of Divine Providence
May 18	St. Leonard Murialdo, Priest, collaborator with Don Bosco in the work of the oratories, founder of the Josephites
May 24	Mary Help of Christians, principal patroness of the Salesian Society and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
May 29	Blessed Joseph Kowalski, Priest and Martyr
June 8	Blessed Stephen Sandor, Religious and Martyr
June 12	Blessed Francis Kesy and Companions, Martyrs
June 23	St. Joseph Cafasso, Priest, Don Bosco's spiritual director
July 7	Blessed Maria Romero Meneses, Virgin
August 2	Blessed August Czartoryski, Priest and Religious
August 25	Blessed Maria Troncatti, Virgin, missionary in Ecuador
August 26	Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá, Youth, pupil of the Salesians

September 22	Blessed Joseph Calasanz (Priest), Henry Saiz (Priests), and Companions (Religious), Martyrs
October 5	Blessed Albert Marvelli, Salesian past pupil
October 13	Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Virgin, Salesian Cooperator
October 24	St. Louis Guanella, Priest, founder of the Servants of Charity
October 29	Blessed Michael Rua, Priest, Don Bosco's first successor
November 5	Mass is celebrated in each Salesian House for all deceased benefactors and members of the Salesian Family
November 14	Blessed Artemides Zatti, Religious, missionary in Patagonia [in Canada, November 13]
November 15	Blessed Madeleine Morano, Virgin
November 25	Anniversary of the death of Mama Margaret, Don Bosco's mother. Mass is celebrated in each Salesian House for the deceased parents of Salesians.
December 5	Blessed Philip Rinaldi, Priest, Don Bosco's third successor, founder of the Don Bosco Volunteers
December 8	Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Birthday of the Salesian work (1841).

## **Devotions, Novenas, and Prayers**

### **Blessings of Mary Help of Christians**

Don Bosco himself composed the formula. He requested its approval from Pope Leo XIII. Among the reasons he gave in his letter to the Pope, Don Bosco wrote: "At all hours of the day the faithful flock to request this blessing, thus bringing about a great increase of piety, frequently with perceptible advantages to their spiritual and temporal necessities. The formula of which we speak is made up of prayers already in use and approved by the liturgy of the Church and benefits the greater glory of God and the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Here is the formula of the blessing:

Priest: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

All: Hail Mary, etc.

Priest: We fly to your patronage, O holy Mother of God despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and Blessed Virgin.

Priest: Mary Help of Christians.

All: Pray for us.

Priest: O, Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto You.

Priest: The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Priest: Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God who, by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, did prepare the body and soul of the glorious Virgin Mother Mary to become a fit dwelling place for Your Son, grant that, as we rejoice in her commemoration, we may, by her loving intercession, be delivered from present evils and from everlasting death.

*(The person blessed is sprinkled with holy water by the priest while he says the blessing.)*

Priest: May the blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you forever.

All: Amen.

Every Salesian priest has the privilege of giving this blessing. It should be stressed that, among the conditions always requisite to obtain graces, the grace we desire is for the good of our soul. Don Bosco advised the boys: "All the graces you seek from Mary Most Holy will be granted, provided you do not ask for powers, and must be convinced above all that we owe all to the Virgin Help of Christians."

### **Novena to Mary, Help of Christians**

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin, Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, we place ourselves under your motherly protection. We promise to be faithful to our Christian vocation and to work for the greater glory of God and the salvation of our souls, and those entrusted to us.

With faith in your intercession, we pray for the Church, for our family and friends, for youth, especially those most in need.

You were St. John Bosco's teacher. Show us how to imitate his virtues: especially his union with God, his chastity, humility, and poverty, his love for work and for temperance, his goodness and total giving of self to others, his loyalty to the Holy Father and to the Church.

Grant, O Mary, Help of Christians, the graces of which we stand in need. (*Here mention your intentions*). May we serve God with fidelity and generosity until death. Help us and our dear ones to attain the boundless joy of being forever with our Father in heaven. Amen.

### **Devotions to Saint John Bosco**

St. John Bosco, who wrote the book for youth and who in so many of its pages by his advice and constant encouragement shows how much he loves all boys, was born on August 16, 1815, and died on January 31, 1888.

From the age of nine, Our Lady began to show him what his life work was to be; but even as a boy Don Bosco was always helping his companions, getting games going, making things for them, and above all, keeping them out of mischief and evil. All his life was spent in the same way, working for boys; building schools, churches, and clubs for them; writing books that would help them to learn more easily and more willingly, not only their Faith, but also their ordinary lessons.

He loves you very much; have great confidence in him; pray to him often, and he will, help you in all your temptations and worries. Above all he will help you to save your soul and get safely to heaven.

### **Prayer to Saint John Bosco**

O St. John Bosco, Father and Teacher of Youth, who has worked so much for the salvation of Souls, be thou our guide in seeking the good of our soul and the salvation of our neighbor. Help us to conquer our passions and all human respect; teach us to love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, Mary, Help of Christians and our Holy Father the Pope, and obtain for us from God the grace of a happy death, so that we may all be gathered together with thee in Heaven. Amen.

### **Invocations and Prayers to Saint John Bosco**

That we may be devout to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, Help of Christians,

St. John Bosco, pray for us.

That we may love youth as you loved them,

St. John Bosco, pray for us.

That we may be constant in our work as you were,

St. John Bosco, pray for us.

That, following your example, we may ever live united with God.

St. John Bosco, pray for us.

Let us pray.

O God, Who through St. John, the Father and Guide of youth, who placed his trust in the wonderful help of the Blessed Virgin, dist gather together new communities in Thy Church: we beseech thee, that inflamed by his charity, we may seek souls and serve Thee alone. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

### **Prayers to Saint John Bosco to Obtain Favors**

O St. John Bosco, full of confidence I have recourse to thine aid. Be thou my intercessor before the Throne of God; obtain for me the grace of never falling into mortal sin and of persevering in good works even until death: furthermore, I beseech thee to obtain for me from God the grace...of which I so greatly stand in need; but if this would redound to the hurt of my soul, beg for me perfect resignation to the Divine Will.

Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory Be, etc.

### **Novena to Saint John Bosco**

Incline onto mine aid, O God.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory Be to the Father.

1. O glorious St. John Bosco, by the love which thou didst bear to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and by the zeal with which thou didst spread this devotion, especially by encouraging assistance at Holy Mass, frequent Communion, and daily visits, obtain for us that we may grow ever more in the love and practice of devotions so holy, and that we may end our days strengthened and comforted by the Heavenly Food of the Most Holy Eucharist.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

2. O glorious St. John Bosco, by that most tender love which thou didst bear to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, who was ever thy Mother and Guide, obtain for us a true and enduring love towards this sweetest of mothers, whence we may inherit her most powerful protection in life and especially at the hour of our death.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

3. O glorious St. John Bosco, by that filial love which thou didst bear towards the Church and to the Pope, whom thou dist constantly defend, obtain for us that we may ever be worthy children of the Catholic Church, and that we may love and venerate, in the Supreme Pontiff, the infallible Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

4. O glorious St. John Bosco, by that great love which thou didst bear towards Youth, of which thou dist make thyself Father and Teacher, and by the heroic sacrifices thou didst bear for its salvation, obtain for us, that we may love with a holy and generous love this chosen portion of the Heart of Jesus and that in every child we may see the adorable person of our Divine Savior.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

5. O glorious St John Bosco, who for the continuation and wider extension of the apostolate, didst found the Salesian Society and the institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, obtain for the members of these two religious families that they always be filled with thy spirit, and be faithful imitators of thy heroic virtues.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

6. O glorious St. John Bosco, who, to obtain in the world more abundant fruits of an active faith and a most tender charity, didst institute the Union of the Salesian Cooperators, pray that its members may be ever be models of Christian virtue and providential helpers of they works.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

7. O glorious St. John Bosco, who didst love all souls with an ineffable love, and who, to save them, didst send thy sons to the ends of the earth, obtain that we may think continually of the salvation of our own soul, and cooperate in every way in the salvation of the souls of our brethren.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

8. O glorious St. John Bosco, who didst love the Virtue of purity with a love of predilection, and who didst inculcate it by word, writing, and example, obtain that we too, enamored of so indispensable virtue, may practice it constantly and diffuse it by every means in our power.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

9. O glorious St. John Bosco, who wert ever so compassionate towards human miseries, look down upon us, so greatly in need of thy aid; pray that the maternal blessings of Mary, Help of Christians, may descend upon our families; obtain for us all the spiritual and temporal favors of which we stand in need; intercede for us in life and in death, so that we, too, eternally may sing the Divine Mercies in Paradise.

Glory Be to the Father, etc.

The most constant piece of advice that St. John Bosco gave was to make love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady, Help of Christians, the center of Catholic life. These are the two poles on which the whole world moves, he said. You must try to make them the center of your life. In his dreams, Don Bosco saw many boys of future who would try to carry out what he has suggested in this little book. Make sure you are one of them.

### **To Mary Help of Christians**

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Help of Christians, we share Don Bosco's belief that you are the foundress and guide of the Salesian Family and so we place ourselves with complete trust under your protection.

Faithful to our Founder's ideal we promise always to work for the glory of God, for young people especially those neglected and at risk and for the whole Salesian Family.

You were Don Bosco's teacher, help us to follow in his footsteps and imitate his humility, his fatherly kindness and his untiring zeal as a shepherd of souls. Teach us also his good respect for the Holy Faith and the bishops. Instill in all Cooperators his love for purity, his simplicity of heart and his cheerfulness of outlook.

Bless all Cooperators throughout the world. Grant that they may remain faithful to their Promise until death, may we be given the joy of coming to know you in Heaven, where we shall see you as you are and join in an unending hymn of praise and thanksgiving to your Son, Jesus and to our Heavenly Father. Amen.

**Jesus Prayer**

Lord Jesus,  
You have looked on me and loved me.  
You have made me a member of your body, the Church,  
And in the Church you have guided me into the family of your disciple St. John Bosco:  
Send the Holy Spirit as you promised so that I may truly respond to your love and your calling.

In the light of your Spirit, O Lord,  
Free me from doubts;  
Show me your face;  
Reveal to me the splendour of your kingdom;  
Open my eyes to your Presence hidden in the heart of the world.

By the living waters of your Spirit of Grace and Peace, O Lord,  
Take away from me sadness and discouragement, the false allurements of riches and deceptive pleasures;  
Open my lips in your praise;  
Let me share in the joy of your Resurrection, and help me spread that joy wherever I go.

Through the breath of your enthusiasm and strength-giving Spirit, O Lord,  
Free me from the fear of putting my life at stake;  
Open up the flowing springs of my energy;  
Make me ever share my happiness with others;  
Help my heart to sympathize with the woes of my brothers;  
Help me give my all for the young and poor.

In the ardour of your Spirit of Love, O Lord,  
gather to yourself all the members of the Salesian Family in perfect unity,  
and grant them increase;  
Open up our hands so that we may work in friendship tirelessly and with humility,  
that your Church may grow and that we may bring joy to your people;  
Help us to form a great uniting bond that will cry aloud the praises of brotherliness.

All for the glory of God our Father.  
Immaculate Virgin Mary, enlighten our minds.

Mary Help of Christians, make us zealous for the Kingdom.

St. John Bosco, pray for us  
And help us to say in all truth to the Lord,  
“Give me souls: all else is naught.” Amen.

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