

To the *Project of Apostolic Life*

Dear Salesian Cooperators,

With the Decree of April 29, 2013, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life has confirmed and approved your *Project of Apostolic Life* in definitive form. It is now your charter of identity in the Church, in the Salesian Family, and in society.

It is offered to you as a “book of life,” which must accompany you always. It contains the renewed *Statutes* and the *Regulations* of the Association of Salesian Cooperators. The *Project of Apostolic Life*, thus approved, guarantees fidelity to the original inspiration of Don Bosco; spiritual, theological, and pastoral harmony with Vatican Council II and the Magisterium of the Church; continuity with the prior *Rule of Apostolic Life*; and the Christian and Salesian response to the new challenges of the world.

Today, December 8, 2013, on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which marked the beginning of our vocation and mission in the world, I, in my capacity as Rector Major and Successor of Don Bosco, do hereby officially promulgate this renewed *Project of Apostolic Life*.

I invite you to welcome and receive it with the gratitude and hope of one who receives a precious treasure.

From this moment of its promulgation, the *Statutes* must occupy a privileged place both in the personal life of every Cooperator and in that of the entire Association. This carries with it the need for its contents to be known and its values interiorized.

The *Statutes* describe the spiritual riches of your charismatic identity; define your apostolic project; trace the path of your sanctification; and invite you to give witness to them as your greatest gift.

They also contain all that which refers to the structure of the Association but they are not exactly a text of juridical norms or a simple doctrinal tract. The *Statutes* delineate the profile of the Salesian Cooperator so he or she might be perfectly suited for his/her vocation and mission. You are a *true Salesian in the world* according to the original intuition of Don Bosco, who wished the Cooperator to be a passionate collaborator of God through the great choices of the Salesian mission: the family, the young, education, the Preventive System, and commitment in social and political environments, giving privileged attention and openness of heart to the poor, the excluded, the ill, and the marginalized of every kind.

The *Statutes* are intimately linked to the Founder, who wished to communicate to you his spirit. In them you can find Don Bosco. Your love for him will show through your taking on and bringing to life the Gospel project which he is offering to you. He is your model.

A necessary complement to the *Statutes* are the *Regulations*, also approved by me, which make the great inspirations from the Gospel and the life choices which are expressed in the *Statutes* normative and able to be put into practice in daily life. This is so because a vital understanding of the *Statutes* would remain incomplete without an adequate study of the *Regulations*. Certainly, we are speaking of two texts which have unique, different natures, but this should not imply that they should be put on different planes as though they differ in importance, but rather, that there needs to be an integration of the two. The first, the *Statutes*, represent your charter of identity and comprise the project of the Founder; the norms relative to

the animation and governance of the Association, as approved by the competent authorities of the Church and which can be modified only with Her approval; and the necessarily harmonized spiritual and juridical elements. The second, the *Regulations*, contain the concrete and practical applications of the universal interests in the *Statutes* and, therefore, are valid to be put into practice in the entire Association. Since some of the norms have been formulated taking into consideration determinate historical conditions, which, *per se*, are mutable, the *Regulations* are, by their very nature, more easily modifiable.

I hand over to you, my dear Salesian Cooperators, this “book of life” as a most precious gift, along with the task of knowing and interiorizing it. It must become the object of your study, of assimilation, of your prayer, and of your life.

I hand it to you with the heart of a father, the heart of Don Bosco, and I entrust you to Mary Help of Christians. She will take you by the hand and will be your Mother and Teacher.



Don Pascual Chávez V., sdb

Rector Major

Rome, December 8, 2013

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary

To the Official Commentary

Dear Salesian Cooperators,

We are living in a time of true Grace from our Lord for our Association and for the entire Salesian Family. Now that the Bicentenary Year of the birth of our Father and Founder Don Bosco has drawn to a close, we prepare ourselves to share, along with the Church Universal, the Holy Year of the Mercy of God that Pope Francis has proclaimed.

It is in this atmosphere of reflection on the love of the Father, the salvation brought to us by the Son Redeemer, and the strength that the Holy Spirit pours out on each one of us and on all, that I present to you this “Commentary on the *Project of Apostolic Life*.” It is an actualization, a dynamic and faithful revision of the former Official Commentary of 1990, in the light of the *Project of Apostolic Life* ratified by the Salesian Cooperator Congress in 2012.

Just like our *Project of Apostolic Life*, this Commentary is also a fruit of the commitment, hard work, study, and discernment of many Cooperators. A lively “thank you,” therefore, goes to the former World Council: Coordinator, Rosario Maiorano, and the Delegates, Don Stjepan Bolkovac and Sr. Maria Trigila, who initiated an immense task of commenting on each individual article of the Statutes. Afterwards, the members of the World Executive Secretary of the present Cooperator World Council collaborated with much dedication and care in drawing up this final version, thus bringing to completion the revision and organizing the comments in a schematic form, complete with clear references to the most recent Magisterium of the Church and to the documents of the Salesian Family.

The *Project of Apostolic Life* is our “ID card”: it describes the spiritual riches of our vocation and traces our way to sanctity through daily service to the young, to families, to the emarginated, and to the excluded.

This Commentary is its necessary complement because it analyzes, chapter by chapter, each individual article and captures each one’s spirit, bringing to the fore the great Gospel inspirations behind the Statutes and their operative and normative translations in the Regulations.

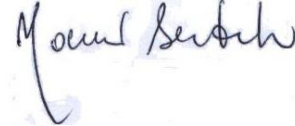
This is, therefore, an opportune and fruitful key to understanding which will permit each one of us to interiorize our Project and to give it concrete expression in the life of our Association.

Inviting you to give joyful witness to Don Bosco’s original notion of wanting us to be *true Salesians in the world*, I offer you this helpful aid which will contribute to guaranteeing that we remain living branches grafted on the Vine.

Rome, January 24, 2016
Feast of St. Francis de Sales

With esteem and affection,

Noemi Bertola

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Noemi Bertola', written over a faint, light blue rectangular stamp or watermark.

To the Compendium

The Association of Salesian Cooperators, through its Formators, has the responsibility of providing quality and efficacious formation programs and initiatives for its Aspirants and Promised Members. The “formation” provided by the Association aims at helping each person follow the call which he or she first received at Baptism and which has been further clarified by the call to live that Baptism in the spirit of Don Bosco and according to the way of life laid out in the Salesian Cooperator’s *Project of Apostolic Life*. Intimately connected with the vocation to Christian life in Baptism, the process of formation is always an interplay between God’s grace, the openness of the individual, and the accompaniment of the Salesian Cooperator community.

What Salesian Cooperator Formation is NOT:

Formation for the Salesian Cooperator cannot be confused with programs of human development that merely hand on information, skills, understandings, or procedures helpful in life. It is not the same as programs of training, teaching, spiritual direction, or indoctrination. Nor can it be limited to gathered moments where the formator follows a set program of topics deemed essential to following one’s call as a Salesian Cooperator. In fact, formation is not a program at all!

What Salesian Cooperator Formation IS:

It is a life-centered *process* that helps the Aspirant or Promised Member deepen the motivations, understandings, life habits, and convictions that underpin his or her response to God’s call. It aims at the harmonious development of the entire person with all his or her gifts and potentialities, fostering the growth of each person in those personal and communal characteristics found to be essential in the *Project of Apostolic Life*.

Formation in the Salesian Cooperator Association also has to be seen within a broader context in one's vocation to Don Bosco's Family. At its very heart, it is a deepening in the Christian, human, and Salesian characteristics that are essential to this way of life. This process of maturation and growth requires an ongoing openness to God's sustaining and nourishing grace, patient, open, and steady interaction with the Holy Spirit (prayer), the Salesian Cooperator community (fellowship), and ministerial experiences (serving the poorest of our young people). It further requires a spirit of reflection and prayer on a personal and communal basis that allows the grace of God's call to sink deeply into the fibers of our lives.

In great part, formation is the fullness of life to which God calls us. We open ourselves to the grace of that call and we embrace the transformation with which it blesses us. It is complete only when there is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His gifts that bring to the person the inner transformation that is essential to living this vocation with fidelity and perseverance. Therefore, formation within the Salesian Cooperator vocation is a life-long commitment and gift.

In summary, formation for the Salesian Cooperator necessitates:

- a larger community of Salesian Family members who accompany him or her;
- an ongoing immersion in the mission of Don Bosco on behalf of the young and families most in need;
- an intimate relationship with God and His Mother, Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians.

Resources for Salesian Cooperator Formation:

The Association at the World Level has put in much time and effort developing and producing formation materials and holding Regional meetings to help train the Formators of all the Regions in their use and in the new pedagogical concept to be employed.

This *Compendium* is meant to be a resource to help these Formators in their task through the deepening of their own knowledge and understanding of the vocation of a Salesian Cooperator as outlined in the *Project of Apostolic Life*. Already included herein is the entire text of both the *Project of Apostolic Life* and its *Official Commentary* as well as that of *Handbook 2018 of St. Philip the Apostle Province*.¹ Added to these are excerpts from Church documents, Salesian Family documents, and other documents of the Association that are related to the topic of each of the 41 Articles of the Statutes of the PVA. Missing are extensive excerpts from our initial formation manual, *Discerning the Call*, and from the *Guidelines and Indications for the Formation of Salesian Cooperators* as every Formator – lay or consecrated – is expected to have a good grasp of the material therein. References to their Lessons and Articles, however, are provided.

In no way is this *Compendium* intended to be an all-inclusive or stand-alone text. At the very least, knowledge of the other official documents of the Association – *Animating Economic Solidarity* and the *Criteria for Animation and Governance* – are foundational to the building of a strong, effective, and dynamic apostolic Association according to the mind and heart of St. John Bosco. Beyond these, there are many ecclesial and secular resources which will be of aid to help the Formator strengthen his or her knowledge of the human, Christian, and Salesian dimensions as well as develop the skills necessary for

¹ The references to *Handbook 2018* included herein are binding for those Cooperators of St. Philip the Apostle Province of New Rochelle, NY, but simply a source of deepening for the Salesian Cooperators of Canada and of the western USA Provinces.

effective teaching and group management. Nor is this resource meant to be a source of ready-made lessons on each article of the PVA. The time, the effort, and the prayer the Formator puts in when preparing a formation gathering are crucial to the quality and depth of the formation.

Most important of all, two even more crucial factors need to be kept firmly in mind as each Formator seeks to fulfill his or her mission within the Association:

- The Holy Spirit is the greatest Formator
- Each Aspirant and each Promised Cooperator is, first and foremost, responsible for his or her own formation

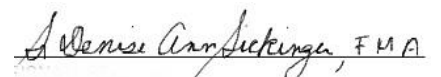
Therefore, the more each Formator is filled with the Holy Spirit and cooperates with His Grace, the more efficacious a channel he or she is to transmit the grace and to act as the Trinity's mediator to the formandi. In the same vein, for growth in their vocation to take place, the Aspirant or Promised Cooperator must also be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and earnest in taking full advantage of the wealth of formation opportunities offered through the Association, the Salesian Family, and the Church. In addition, he or she should not limit "formation" to participation in what is offered but should seek to grow through personal, daily reading and reflection on Sacred Scripture and on Salesian and ecclesial sources and those secular ones that are not at dissonance with the Magisterium of our holy Church.

The aim is to help form Salesian Cooperators who gradually assimilate their Salesian vocational identity as they become on fire with the love of the Lord, of Mary Help of Christians, and of our Salesian Family, both in Heaven and on earth, and who want to share that passion in their Salesian apostolate with the young most in need and families – beginning with their own but not ending there.

With much heartfelt prayer,



Fr. Thomas A. Dunne, SDB



Sr. Denise Ann Sickinger, FMA
Province Delegates

Stony Point, NY, and Haledon, NJ

November 25, 2018

Venerable Margherita Occhiena Bosco

Don Bosco's mom and his first and greatest Cooperator