



INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE LAY MARIST VOCAATION

STAGE II
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WELCOMING, NURTURING, LIVING AND SHARING OUR VOCATION.

Sheet 4 - Annex 3
Legal structures

ITINERARIES AND PROCESSES OF FORMATION AND MENTORING - SHEET 4 / 3

POSSIBLESIBLE LEGAL STRUCTURES FOR THE LAITY

Annex 3

ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

Documents

1986: "Rule of Apostolic Life ", under the impulse of Vatican II. Approved by the Holy See. It outlines the personal and associative identity of the co-operators, who are described as:

- mature people
- Christians of strong faith and conviction, who want to bear witness to Christ in the world;
- practising members of the Church, who want to express their baptismal commitment to participate in its mission;
- lay people capable of being Christian leaders in the context of the world; apostles fired up to advance the cause of the Kingdom; true Salesians, called to share in and extend our educational work;
- Christians committed to sanctifying themselves by living Don Bosco's apostolic project.

The identity of Cooperators has three basic dimensions:

It is a vocation, that is, a call to those baptised who bear the Salesian charism (Some Christians, "... moved by the Holy Spirit, are attracted by the figure of Don Bosco and by the possibility of 'working with him' while remaining in the world").

They are lay, i.e. living everyday commitments as opportunities to witness to and bring Gospel and Salesian values to bear on human realities ("The Lay Co-operator carries out his commitment and lives the Salesian spirit in normal living and working conditions, with sensitivity and lay characteris-

tics, disseminating his values in his own environment").

They are Salesian, i.e. the heritage of spiritual and pedagogical values bequeathed by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, as the founding element of their own experience of faith, of their own way of being and acting (The Salesian spirit "is a typical evangelical experience that characterises and gives a concrete tone to their presence and action in the world, to their relationship with their brothers and sisters and to their relationship with God").

Currently: a new "Project of Apostolic Life" (approved by the Holy See in 2013).

In two parts: a set of *Statutes* that determine the vocational identity and the mission of Salesian Cooperators (SSCC) and a Rule about their structure and organisation.

History

The Salesian Cooperators date back to the origins of Don Bosco's apostolic project to help poor, abandoned boys: the Oratories. From the early days in Turin, he engaged men and women of different backgrounds and places to help him, within the bounds of their possibilities. As he expanded his work he realised not only that he was increasingly in need of cooperators (including priests, but above all lay people) linked to the Salesian mission, but also to form an association for them in order to give greater power to their work.

Initially, he wanted them to be "extern" members of the Con-



gregation of St Francis de Sales, with a specific legal status in the Congregation's Constitutions. But the Holy See rejected this proposal, and he decided to organise them in the "Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators" (today's ACS), with its own Regulations which were approved by Pius IX in 1876. The membership grew rapidly, and with their active help, the Cooperators made it possible to create and develop workshops for arts and crafts, mutual aid societies, farm projects, printing shops, day and evening schools, oratories, homes and shelters, missions and orphanages.

In 1895 the first International Congress of Cooperators empowered them to contribute to resolving the great social issues created by the advent of industrialisation. This work, based on the very ideals of freedom, justice and fellowship which are themselves Christian values, to this day continues in the business world, schools, social work, politics and the media.

Identity

The Regulations of Apostolic Life were drawn up in 1986. Faithful to the ideas of the Founder, they followed the Magisterium of the second Vatican Council and set out the identity of Cooperators as humanly mature people; convinced practising Christians; laity aware of their vocation as baptised Christians called to take part in the mission of the Church in the world; authentic Salesians striving for holiness, sharing and bringing their concern for education everywhere, a key element in Don Bosco's apostolic project.

The founding element of their experience of faith and the way they live and conduct themselves is "being Salesians", namely, possessing that heritage of spiritual and educational values bequeathed by Don Bosco and by Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello (co-foundress with Don Bosco of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) which leads them to give pride of place to the following areas of action:

- the family, to foster its growth as a community of persons founded on love and educational relations;
- the school and educational institutions, to provide a comprehensive education to young people through a pedagogy imbued with the Salesian spirit;
- youth centres, to promote the healthy and creative use of free time, receptive to such values as friendship, solidarity, and commitment to others;
- the parish and the oratory, to cooperate in animating youth groups, combining education with evangelisation;
- social communication, which creates culture and disseminates models of living among the people so as to bring the love for truth, concern for education, and

preference for positive messages into the world of the mass media;

- politics, social services, voluntary service, to make the institutions more attentive to the common good, to young people, to the idea of prevention in order to solve problems;
- the world of labour, to bear witness and promote an ethic of service, solidarity with the weakest and concern for the needs of the unemployed, moving beyond the rationale of pure economic efficiency.

Types of bonding and belonging.

- Public Association of Christ's Faithful.
- A program that runs over two years. Public promise.
- Organisational and financial autonomy. Sense of subsidiarity and solidarity.

Don Bosco wanted Cooperators to be capable of a common spiritual commitment: "No external work is prescribed for Salesian Cooperators, as long as their lives can in some way resemble that of those who live in a religious community".

Profile of associates

- Men and women, attracted by the charism of Don Bosco, who want to live their faith in his spirit. Committed to the salvation of young people, according to the educational ideal of the Saint.
- Diocesan priests can also join the Association.
- A two-year formative journey.
- The Association is like a second family for Salesian Cooperators.
- A range of possibilities for apostolic work. Mutual support.

Recommendations made to Associates include: "Modesty in dress. Frugality at table. Simplicity in house furnishings. Moderation in speech. Care in the duties of one's state". Salesian Cooperators are also called to base their lives on the Gospel in regard to sexuality, money, material resources and personal freedom.

Relationship with Salesian religious

Integration within the wide outreach of the Salesian Family.



Lay people involved in many fields: family and educational ministry, sport, catechesis, the world of culture and politics...

Presence in schools, families, parishes, universities, voluntary work, publishing houses, journalism...

Structure

The basic unit of the ACS is the Centre, which groups together the Cooperators working in a given territory, forming the living cell of the Association, and the place for formative and operational exchange. The life and work of the centre are governed and animated by the local council.

Centres are grouped by Province, and are accountable to the Salesians' Inspectorate ("Province"), and animated by the Inspectorate Council. The Provincial Centres animate, organise and govern the Association in liaison with the World Council.

The Country or Region which ensures contact and communion between the various Inspectorates is created as a National Conference in countries with a large number of Cooperators (Italy, Spain, Poland and Argentina), and as a Regional Conference in countries like India and Brazil.

The World Convention, made up of one member elected for each Region of the Salesian Congregation, and five members appointed by the Rector Major, is responsible for animating the whole Association and coordinating the educational and apostolic activities under the guidance of the Rector Major. They meet twice a year. Permanent governance is maintained by a Global Executive Secretariat.

Distribution

ACS has about 26,000 members and is present in 58 countries as follows: Africa (6), Asia (8), Europe (18), North America (13), Oceania (2), South America (11).

Contexts differ across the regions: Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa. But they have the same spirit of Don Bosco: "We make holiness consist in always being joyful".

ITALY – MIDDLE EAST - MALTA	6200
SPAIN/PORTUGAL	3050
EUROPE CENTRE-WEST	1238
EUROPA CENTRE-EAST	3895
EAST ASIA - OCEANIA	2011
SOUTH ASIA – INDIA	2766
AFRICA - MADAGASCAR	940
AMERICA CONO SUR	1455
BRAZIL	1105
INTERAMERICA	2049

**SALESIAN COOPERATORS (SSCC):
11 REGIONS - 26.239 COOPERATORS**

Works

Salesian Cooperators generally place themselves at the service of the works of the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), sometimes holding posts of responsibility. In some situations, particularly in the Third World, they manage oratories, schools and family hostels.

Don Bosco wanted the Cooperators to be co-responsible for the Salesian mission: "The Salesian Cooperators," he wrote in his Rule, "are offered the same harvest as the Congregation of St Francis de Sales, with which they wish to be associated". Consequently, they are inserted in the reality of the world: "By becoming Salesian Cooperators, they can continue in the midst of their ordinary occupations, in the bosom of their families...".



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