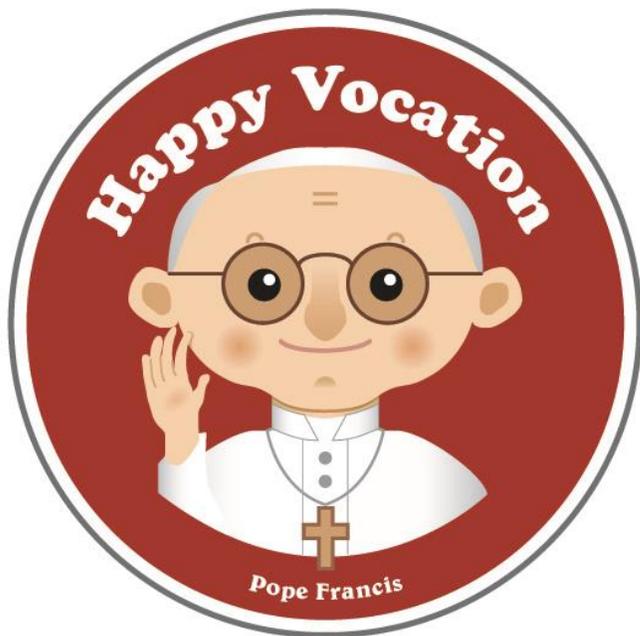


Salesian Cooperators Annual General Meeting 2015

Hong Kong - China, March 22



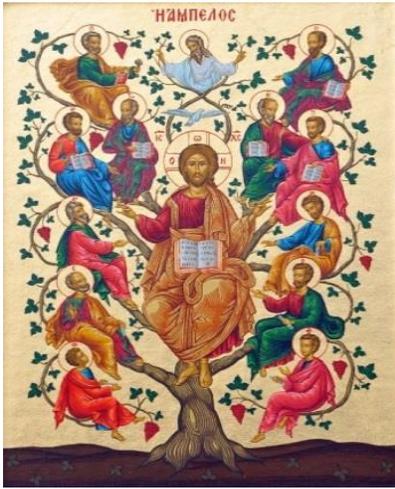
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First of all I'm sharing to all of you the heartfelt greeting from the 10th successor of Don Bosco, Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime, our Rector Major and the Superior of the Association of the Salesian Cooperators! His main message for Don Bosco 200 is "Let's imitate Don Bosco!"

I'm deeply convinced that for the future of Salesian Charism of Don Bosco, the growth of Salesian Cooperators vocation is essential. I'm very glad for this invitation and topic you asked me to share with you today as Salesian Cooperators. Indeed this extraordinary visitation 2015 of China provinces is strongly marked by a **special attention to the vocation – formation and mission of our lay mission partners, with their model of 'Salesian Cooperator'**.

I would like to share with you today four questions and four different stories, in order to contribute to the recently launched movement of '**HAPPY VOCATION**'. Please, accept these questions as a help on youth faith journey as Catholic faithful and on your vocation journey as Salesian Cooperators. I'm strongly convinced that the 126 questions of Jesus in the Gospels are for us a great gift. Also the way Don Bosco's way of education of his Salesians, youth and Salesian Cooperators is full of dialogue with many questions. Last January 31st we shared with much fruits among the Salesian Cooperators in Taiwan two questions: *What did change in your life after making the promise of Salesian Cooperator? - How can we grow together as Don Bosco Salesian Cooperators?* **As Salesian Cooperators don't be afraid to share open questions in your monthly meetings and daily dialogue with God! It helps us grow in our vocation.**

Question 1: What are the two most important words in the Bible?



*Biblical icon of the SDB: 2014-2020
"JESUS - VINE TREE"(Gospel of John 15,1-15)*

We can answer in many ways, but probably the answer of one senior Salesian Cooperator (mother of SDB Provincial in the Philippines) can bring us to the right track: **When Jesus calls his disciples 'COME!' and when Jesus sends his disciples on a special mission 'GO!'** Two thousand years later Pope Francis does confirm this importance, when he invites all Catholic faithful to become **DISCIPLES** (listening faithfully their call from God and following Jesus) – **MISSIONARIES** (having a clear sense of being sent by God). Also all of us are called to become DISCIPLES-MISSIONARIES of Jesus!

Each call of God is always a wonderful trust of God in each of his children connected with sending us to some special mission in this world. The biblical icon chosen by the Salesians of Don Bosco in their General Chapter 27 for this period of six years is another sign of deep unity between a CALL and MISSION. Vocation is not just 'something given' – each Vocation is an ongoing relationship between God who is calling and each of us accepting and following his call!

Pope Francis brought to the Universal Catholic Church his experience of living the Gospel in the daily life of the Basic Christian Communities of Latin America. He doesn't grow tired repeat again and again that the main point of Catholic Church today is to follow Jesus as disciples – missionaries who feel every day new need to be evangelized, to be saved by God.

Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis 'The Joy of the Gospel' (2014, November 24) should be close to each of Salesian Cooperators! The way to Happy Vocation of each Catholic believer and the Vision about the joyful and out-reaching Church can be smell in this Road Map for the 21st century!

Question 2: How does grow your Vocation?



As you know, if a small plant does not grow, means it's going to die. We received many gifts from God: especially the **GIFT OF LIFE (1)** then we thank for the **GIFT of FAITH (2)** – to believe in the Love of God in Jesus Christ! And for us, Salesians (SDB,FMA and Salesian Cooperators) it does mean also the **GIFT OF SPECIAL VOCATION (3)** to live the Gospel of Jesus in the style of Don Bosco.

Of course, as every gift of God – it's a grace, free gift without any merit of ours. But our life, faith and vocation are all also tasks to be taken up: discovered, nurtured, re-motivated (we call this animation and formation) and to be lived in the mission.

Your Project of Apostolic Life (PAL, ed. 2013) speaks a lot about '**Vocation**' and especially about **Apostolic Vocation** – about twenty times in the Statutes (2; 3; 8§2, 14§3, 21, 28§1, 30§1, 32§1, 33; Regulations 1§1, 21§1).

Let's listen to the art 2. Of Project of Apostolic Life: '**TO COMMIT ONESELF to be a Salesian Cooperator means to respond to the apostolic Salesian Vocation.** Catholics can follow this path. They feel called to live their faith life fully involved in each day concern, characterized by two attitudes: (1) **sense of God**: relationship to loving God, Father – Son and Holy Spirit and by (2) **sense of concrete mission**: to contribute to the salvation of youth, committing themselves to Don Bosco's very mission to the young and to the ordinary folk (*cfr. 'Giovanni Bosco, Salesian Cooperators as a Practical Way of Contributing to Public Morality and to the Good of Society - original Regulations of the Salesian Cooperators, 1876)*

How does grow our Salesian Cooperators vocation?

This question can help us a lot: it's about our personal formation: it's about our daily growth in faith, in getting know more Don Bosco and his Way of education and sharing the Gospel with all around me and especially with the young people. Yes, it's also a question about our growth in Salesian mission.

There are many obstacles on our vocation journey. There are small daily difficulties when we are getting tired, but there are also times of true crisis in our answer to God's call. Yes, it's about vocation crisis. I have learnt a lot from my personal crisis of my Salesian missionary vocation. *It happened in Gwangju Salesian School, Korea in 1992... (storytelling).* **Also we can share with fruit about our vocation crisis – and how do we overcome these moment of crisis.**

Question 3: What makes you truly and deeply happy and joyful as Salesian Cooperator?



Taiwan – Taipei, St. John Bosco Parish Salesian Cooperators

That's my often times shared question with my fellow brother Salesians, with our mission partners and with the young people. I found it very fruitful to get in touch with the heart of other disciple of Jesus. There are different answers of this kind: "Yes, I'm happy, but sometimes I feel lonely"... "Yes, I'm happy but..."

When we reflect honestly about life, amidst of our daily struggles we find many little moments of deep joy. Usually they are fruit of **living with commitment our faith, vocation and mission:** Let's share together in each center about how do we live this wonderful article 8 of the Project of Apostolic life about *Apostolic Commitment*:

Salesian Cooperators carry out their mission (1) **first of all through their daily tasks** - committed to putting into practice the Gospel ideal of love for God and for one's neighbor in the ordinary circumstances of life; (2) they **give special attention to young people, especially to those who are poorest or victims of any kind of marginalization, exploitation, or violence; to young workers; and to those who show signs of a specific vocation.** (3) Married Salesian Cooperators live their mission through their marriage as "**co-operators with the love of God** the Creator" and as "the first and chief educators of their children" according to the pedagogy of goodness proper to the Preventive System. (4) They are attentive to the Social Justice Doctrine of the Church and to **Social Communication** so as to foster educational journeys to grow in these areas (5) and they **support the Church's missionary activity** and commit themselves to educate to a global perspective as an opening to dialogue among cultures.

That's great! I still keep deep in my heart this sharing of one senior Salesian Cooperator. Paul was involved in the Valdocco house of Korea, where the young Salesians in formation are mixed with the youth at risk (probation - last chance before going to the juvenile prison). He shared honestly that it took him about 10 years to understand that his 'being a Salesian Cooperator is not just 'give a hand' in the Salesian mission, but it's about a special vocation – **accept a call, to be a Cooperator of God with the heart of Don Bosco!** (*Project of Apostolic Life, Statutes 14§3*)

4. What is your Mission? - This is the true witness to your happy vocation!



Venerable Attilio Giordani, Italian Salesian Cooperator, daily committed in the Youth Center

I'm happy to meet many happy and committed Salesian Cooperators during first two months of the Extra-ordinary visitation. Starting from Tung Chung Sunday Oratory for the South Asia migrants, through the Taiwanese centers celebrating Don Bosco's Feastday, your Provincial Council and young Cooperators of St. Louis Center in action during their Sunday Youth Center activity... It's good to keep the living memory of those committed Salesian Cooperators who are already in heaven.

I treasure the witness of Attilio Giordani, husband and father of three children, who spent every day after his work three hours in the Oratory as excellent youth animator. According his boys he was more 'salesian' than many SDB priests and brothers! After early retirement he left as lay missionary for Brazil where he died in 1972.

During past six years of my service as the General Councilor for the Missions I have visited some **90 countries** where the Salesians working for the young. It's amazing experience to meet thousands Salesian family members who work in many extreme situations in all five continents: in the Amazon forest of America or in the slums of Africa and India. Among them I treasure the memory of Fr. Louis Bolla, who died just two years ago. He spent 50 years in the remote village of Shuar tribe in the Amazon rain forest of Peru. His house was probably the poorest Salesian facility in the world we can imagine: no doors or windows, no electricity or communication with the rest of world. In spite of this extreme poverty Fr. Bolla was able to raise up the first generation of Catholics among the famous warrior people. He was famous for his contagious joyful witness and hardworking (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPrmouP6rfQ>).

Radical commitment of any Salesian cooperator is the best witness to our happy vocation!

Without Lay Mission Partners there is no future of Salesian Consecrated Life!

One year long period of Don Bosco Jubilee Year (2014-2015) helps us to re-discover the roots of Salesian consecrated life – our DNA in the history and spirit of Don Bosco.

When Don Bosco passed away in 1888 he left some 776 SDB and more than 250 FMAs. But Don Bosco left also a great flock of 80.000 Salesian Cooperators. In 1888 there were some 100 Salesian Cooperators per 1 consecrated Salesian Brother or Priest!

Fr. Pascual Chávez used to say ‘**there is not future of the consecrated life without the lay people**’ (in our region we would say ‘without our lay mission partners’). What about our ten EAO provinces? How many among thousands of teachers, catechists and parish council members, SYM group animators are deeply identified with Don Bosco? I can observe in 2014 during my first animation visits a renewed movement to spread and foster Salesian Cooperators Association in many of EAO provinces. At present we have 2500+ members of the Association with 300+ aspirants organized in 120+ local Centers.

During the Sixth EAO Regional Congress of the Salesian cooperators (Manila, April 2014) was elected after 6 years again Mr. Philip Yu (China – Hong Kong) as the World councilor for our Region. The recently renewed edition of ‘**Project of Apostolic Life**’ off Salesian Cooperator Association – already translated in Korean and Thai – should be in our hands and studied by each Salesian of Don Bosco (SDB General Regulations, 38).

Thanks to God, during this year numerous Salesian cooperators made their **promise** in Taiwan (53), Vietnam (39), Korea (29), Philippines (26) and Japan (2). At least six new Centers started (Taiwan -3, Philippines North -3), Thai Cooperators prepared their second Congress of local centers after 26 years and recent trend of new Salesian Cooperators diocesan priests and bishops (Cambodia-Taiwan) is showing a way forward. Wonderful gift is shared by the FIS province with some **165 aspirants being prepared** for their promise on August 16, 2015! After meeting personally many EAO Cooperators Centers during past four months I feel we should invest more in the **formation of SDB Delegates** and help each local Salesian community to foster Salesian Cooperators vocation. First step might be a careful reading of the recently published **Project of Apostolic Life!** Let’s start with a prayerful reading of the Salesian Cooperator Promise (PAL, art. 32).

Yes, there are still many SDB and FMA communities or even some countries in our Region without any Salesian Cooperator (Fiji, Laos, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa, and Solomon Islands). To (re) launch the Salesian Cooperator vocation in each of our community might be one of the best gifts to the 200th Birthday of Don Bosco.

With Mamma Margaret, the first Cooperator of Don Bosco
I wish you a “Good night!”

Fr. Václav Klement, SDB
Regional Councilor East Asia – Oceania
Good Night Talk - November 1, 2014

<http://www.bosco.link>

Facebook: EAO Salesian Family