

ACTIVITIES REPORT OF THE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COLLABORATORS

The Vietnam Association of Salesian Collaborators was established in 1995 and adopted Saint John Bosco as its patron saint, initiated by Bishop Peter Nguyen van De (then the current Provincial of Salesians) along with Brother Josaphat Tran Quang Dai. The first candidates are less than 20 people, coming from many parishes and introduced by Salesian parish priests in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). After a period of formation and commitment, the Salesian Province established the first Collaborators Center and went into operation according to vocation. Through the process of promoting vocations and activities with the accompaniment and spiritual direction of the priests of the Salesian Communities, up to now, after 27 years with difficulties and obstacles due to the State's mechanism of organizing religious activities, and the specificity of collaborators activities only connecting with Salesian and FMA communities, those parishes which are not belongs to Salesian and FMA line do not know who collaborators are. Currently in 2023 there are 18 centers including 757 committed men and women collaborators and 70 candidates with an average age of 50 years old who are learning. The formation and development of vocations are always linked with places where there are Salesian and FMA Communities. Collaborators centers are spread across many places in Vietnam, if taking Salesian Provincial House (Thu Duc - Saigon) as the starting point, the nearest Collaborators Center is 2 km and the farthest is about 1,712 km. There are about 500 members in regular activities. The remaining members have passed away, changed their location to the another without Collaborators' activities, got old, got sick, and left the Association.

Provincial Council personnel are nominated from 18 centers across the country. Candidates are collaborators who meet certain criteria set by the Association, hold a public election by secret ballot to select 7 people in the presence of a number of Salesian priests, FMA sisters and members from 18 Centers. The election meeting was held at the Provincial House or a Salesian community. The winner must obtain 2/3 of the total direct votes. The Provincial Coordinator will be immediately elected by secret ballot of the Provincial Council members. The remaining members will allocate responsibility according to their ability to each function. The Province of Salesian and FMA will appoint 1 priest or brother and 1 sister as commissioners to work together with the Provincial Council until the end of the 3-year term.

Since 2017, the Provincial Council has established a separate group for the Provincial Council and a group for Coordinating online centers to regularly exchange information and run activities. In addition to online information exchange, the full meeting of members is held twice a year for annual planning. Each year, a Salesian priest is invited to compile, preach and train according to the topic and content in the "Apostolic Life Plan" of collaborators, planning to organize training date and location for all collaborators and candidates in centers at the appropriate time for each region. The Provincial Council, if it is convenient, will visit each center once a year on the occasion of the Center's Founding Anniversary. Expenses for transportation, plane tickets, meals for business trips, visits to sick members, funerals, ceremonies related to the Association of Provincial Council members are paid for by individual without using the funds of the Provincial Council Associations.

The Provincial Council is responsible for planning the annual meeting of all collaborator centers nationwide in October. If this is the year of changing Provincial Council members, it is also an

opportunity to introduce new members of the Provincial and Centers Council. This annual meeting is held for 2 days and 1 night, at a Salesian Retreat Center in Vietnam. During this meeting, the members will have a retreat to reaffirm their committed vocation, meet and exchange with all Salesian priests, FMA sisters, all collaborators, candidates nationwide, by confiding, exchanging and sharing the activities of each center where they are serving. Each center will perform a cultural performance in the night, introduce and invite to enjoy some of their local specialties to everyone. Eligible candidates for at least 2 consecutive years continuing to learn and train will be committed to join the Association during this mass, after receiving the appraisal and evaluation minutes from the local Central Council, forwarded to the Provincial Council for approval.

Each local collaborators center will organize the public election of the Coordinating Committee by secret ballot with the presence of the Provincial Council. This Coordinating Board consists of 6 nominees elected by secret ballots with the same 3-year term of the Provincial Council and 1 Salesian priest or 1 FMA sister who is a member and always works together, spiritually directs and accompanies the center at all times. Each Center also establishes a separate website to connect information with its members.

Each center depends on the development and geography of the area. There is a center whose members are all of a parish; another consists members from 6 different parishes. Normal activities will be held on one day of the month depending on local circumstances. It takes some members to go more than 15 km to the place of activities. The main content in these activities is to continue training according to the "Collaborators Apostolic Life Plan", through the assistant teaching of the priest or the commissioner sister, launching activities according to the criteria of serving young people, collaborating with the parish to teach catechism, supplementary education, summer camps, cooking, etc. The activities of the centers do not limit at the local area, but also reach out to children in remote ones who are lacking in many aspects of daily life. Operating expenses are contributed monthly by members.

All activities of the collaborators are in accordance with the criteria, the purpose and direction of Saint John Bosco is to serve the Youth, especially the poor abandoned children.

Ho Chi Minh City May 9, 2023

Provincial Coordinator

Dominic VU QUANG NINH