

## Formation for Communion and Mission

Each group of the Salesian Family takes care of the formation of its own members while drawing on the common patrimony and its own specific features. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify common elements and possible convergences and to hope for forms of collaboration.

### **Art. 38. Awareness of the specific identities**

In addition to the common charism and the same mission, the communion of the Salesian Family is based also on knowledge and appreciation of the different groups which make it up. Unity, in fact, is never uniformity, but plurality of expressions converging on a single centre.

It is therefore necessary to foster knowledge about each other in order to enjoy the gifts and the particular features of each group insofar as together they constitute a treasure that is to everyone's benefit. Helpful in contributing to this are contacts on an occasional or regular basis, informal or official, social gatherings and moments of prayer in common.

Distribution of the *Charter of charismatic and spiritual identity*, of writings about Don Bosco, of biographies of the founders or cofounders, of the annual strena of the Rector Major, of the planning documents of the individual groups, of the *Salesian Bulletin*, of particularly significant apostolic experience, can contribute to reciprocal knowledge and esteem and at the same time re-enforce the unity of the Family. Special attention needs to be given to the groups directly begun by Don Bosco and those present and at work in one's own area.

### **Art. 39. Shared formation**

To ensure unity of spirit and a convergence on the mission, moments of formation in common are also necessary, especially when it is a question of throwing light on or studying in depth the essential aspect of the charism or of planning joint projects. All of this can be done while

always respecting legitimate autonomy, but also that family spirit which expresses and strengthens unity.

In order to be formed together, it is necessary, above all, to learn to *think together*, since there is always the danger of simply leading the other person to one's own point of view. This is possible when the fear of real debate and discussion is overcome, when instead of focusing on oneself each one concentrates on the others, when the aim is seen to be what is good in itself and not the affirmation of oneself, and when truth and charity come together.

In addition, it is necessary to learn to *work together*, identifying the methods and strategies for shared reflection and constructive dialogue. It is always and everywhere necessary to *pray together* since the Spirit is the light of truth and source of unity, the One who inspires all that is good, just and right for the benefit of individuals and of the whole.

There can be many occasions for formation in common:

- study sessions on aspects of the charismatic experience which are common yet differentiated, on the spirituality which is proper to us, on the patrimony inherited from Don Bosco, on the challenges which the signs of the times present to us, on the main ecclesial events or on important directives of the pontifical and episcopal magisterium;
- discussions on youth ministry issues and problems, on particular topics of Salesian pedagogy, on strategies regarding the mission in view of the new evangelisation;
- participation in a process of discernment in situations of particular difficulty or with regard to formation programs or apostolic projects to be undertaken together.

Particularly relevant in this area is the Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family, which needs the presence and the support of all the groups.

#### **Art. 40. Taking one's place in different settings**

The mission requires the ability to enter varied cultural, social and ecclesial contexts, being able to perceive urgent needs and demonstrating the ability to collaborate with all those working for good.

For this, it is necessary to train oneself to adopt a listening attitude without prejudice, acceptance without being suspicious, appreciation without jealousy, participation without reservation.

It is in this way that a contribution is made to the inculturation of the Faith and of the charism while ecclesial communion is built up, always wider than that of a particular group or of the Salesian Family itself.

It is a formation that takes place in the practical circumstances of meetings with groups, movements and associations which express the richness of the Church and place themselves at the service of the Kingdom.

First among these is the vast Salesian Movement, of which the spiritual Family of Don Bosco constitutes the animating centre.

Other places which favour this formation are constituted by the presence of the groups of the Family in the local Churches, and by collaboration with other ecclesial groupings operating in the area. The multiform grace of God given to the various ecclesial movements expresses itself in a particular spirituality and in an original apostolic form which needs to be known and accepted, while to all we offer the gift of our charismatic identity and the support of our specific mission. It is a formation which educates to respect each other, to be generous in charity and to be willing to collaborate with patience and farsightedness, and to be ready to accept the sacrifice this sometimes implies.

As the Salesian Family, stimulated by the example of Don Bosco, who for everyone had sentiments and words of acceptance and gratitude and who knew how to share with everyone insights, experiences and

achievements, we are called to strengthen the gift received and to share it with the whole Church.

#### **Art. 41. Methodology for collaboration**

Knowing how to collaborate does not come automatically; formation is needed that takes into consideration certain essential elements:

1. Above all, it is necessary to educate oneself about ***planning together***. Every educative and apostolic activity should start from an analysis of the situation of one's own beneficiaries and aim at achieving certain specific objectives, short, medium and long-term. All this needs to be studied and planned together, making good use of the skills available, respecting different points of view and encouraging convergence.
2. It is necessary to work together on the strategies of ***coordination***. The combination of different forces in view of an enterprise never occurs automatically. In fact, certain abilities are required: to have precise knowledge of the problem one intends to solve, to clarify the purpose of the exercise, to weigh up realistically the possibilities for action, to assess the forces and the resources available, and to state honestly the support that one can give and one intends to give.
3. It is also necessary to accept the consequences of the logic of ***reciprocal*** action. Giving and receiving are never uni-directional. Mutual appreciation is an awareness of one's own gifts and those of others, the recognition of one's own worth and that of others, the acceptance and the exchange of complementary sensitivities, ideas and skills, and making contributions with generosity and humility.
4. Finally, it is necessary to educate oneself to ***shared responsibility***. The success of collaboration in the educative and apostolic fields depends on both the acceptance of a primary responsibility that coordinates the project, and the recognition of the responsibilities of others, giving everyone space so that they can actively take part in carrying out the common plan.

### **Art. 42. The role of the priest in the Salesian Family**

Vatican Council II presents priests as guides and educators of the people of God. It states, "Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing will be of little value if they are not directed toward educating men in the attainment of Christian maturity".<sup>42</sup>

And it gives the reason for this affirmation: "As educators in the faith priests must see to it, either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation as required by the Gospel, to a sincere and active charity and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free".<sup>43</sup>

In this way, the Salesian priest is called to his most significant responsibilities in the area of formation. The Word of God, the sacraments and in particular the Eucharist, the service of unity and of charity represent the greatest treasures of the Church.

Paraphrasing an expression of the Council, it can be said that it is not spiritually possible to form an apostolic Family such as the Salesian Family unless it has, as its basis and centre, the celebration of the Eucharist, from which must originate all education aimed at forming the spirit of the family. <sup>44</sup>

The groups of the Salesian Family have always demonstrated this requirement for formation, and they re-enforce it in this *Charter of Identity*.

<sup>42</sup> PO 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>44</sup> *See Ibid.*