

ANIMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY

JOURNEYING TOGETHER
TO BE A GREATER PROPHECY AND GIFT
FOR THE WHOLE CHURCH



THE SECRETARIAT OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

ANIMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY

The Secretariat of the Salesian Family

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Ad Experimentum

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Presentation

The challenge of journeying together

Journeying together as the Salesian Family. Here are some challenges presented by the *Charter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family* (2012). The word *together* has taken shape gradually as the *Charter* has been studied and understood by the more than 30 Groups belonging to it and has been implemented in the Salesian Family Advisory Councils at various levels.

The *Charter* aims high. The communion involved in this *together* is part of our being, of our identity. We are also aware that *journeying together* is a true prophecy for the world, an inestimable gift that the Spirit has wanted to give his Church, the horizon established by Don Bosco for his sons and daughters. What is the Spirit asking at this stage of history?

Reflecting on *journeying together as a Salesian Family* is the aim of this document, to deepen the particular responsibilities of the various Groups and individual members in the animation and accompaniment, to achieve a renewal in the way of carrying out their mission with dynamic fidelity. A responsibility and a renewal that stem from the awareness of the prophetic nature of our Family which, as a portion of God's holy people, shares in the prophetic gift of Christ.¹

The reflection must be made in the light of the *Identity Charter*, in order to draw from it motivations and practical guidelines that contribute to further development of the exercise of animation and accompaniment in the Salesian Family.

In the elaboration of this work our starting point has been our experience over recent decades. We have paid attention to the new challenges of the world in light of the Gospel, the Magisterium of the Church, and

¹ Vatican II, LG, 12.



the teaching of the Rectors Major. People from different continents with significant experience in animation and accompaniment in the Salesian Family have contributed to its development, alongside the members of the Secretariat. The text, however, is open to further contributions and additions.

The prophecy of accompanying

The brochure is structured in two parts. The first: **The Charismatic Family of Don Bosco, a prophecy for the young and the poor in the Church and in the world.**²

This part makes reference to the figure of Don Bosco as Founder of the Salesian Family and to its prophetic mission, highlighting some of the consequences that result from this:

- the prophecy of being a charismatic Family in the Church;
- the prophecy of being communion in missionary synodality;
- the prophecy of being a shared mission.

The second: **Structures or bodies of animation and accompaniment.** This second part deals with:

- the essential perspectives of animation and accompaniment in the Salesian Family;
- the nature of the various animation and accompaniment structures at world and local level, and the role of the individuals called to carry out the service of animation and accompanying both as a whole and within the individual Groups;

² It is worth recalling the identity of the true prophet: "The prophet is a believer chosen by God to speak to men in his name.. In fulfilling this function he lives in intimate relationship with God so as to hear, understand and faithfully transmit his message. What he communicates to others comes not from himself but from the heart of God himself A God who is not merely a kind of great architect of the world but also the Lord of history, who has an immense love for man and remains unbelievably at his side in the events of his freedom." (Egidio Viganò, AGC 346).

- the fundamental attitude with which delegates / facilitators (animators) are called to grow in order to respond to the task entrusted to them.

A guide for the journey

The document is presented as an invitation to commit ourselves more, as the Salesian Family, to the common response to God's call to grow in quality and depth. The guidelines offered require a spill-over into the provinces or territorial areas, taking into account the characteristics of each situation.

Hence it is desirable that every local area manages to establish the Salesian Family Advisory Councils;³ that every Advisory Council succeeds in developing its own plan for animation and accompaniment involving all the Groups; that each Group includes in its project and planning everything concerning the Salesian Family in its local area. Apostolic fecundity can only come from the complementarity and synergy of the different Groups of the Salesian Family in the local area.

³ The term *Advisory Council* is an institutional expression of the charismatic unity of the various Groups found in the area (worldwide, provincial, or local). It comprises the Group Leaders present in it with the aim of promoting communion, ensuring the development of the charism, reflecting together, planning common initiatives, and strengthening the vocational ministry and pastoral activity of each Group.



QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Looking at the situation of the Salesian Family in your local area, what are the strong points and the challenges?
2. How has the together aspect of the challenge been experienced? What can the Spirit of God ask of us in this regard?
3. There is a powerful word here: “Prophecy”. If we apply the word prophecy to journeying together as a Salesian Family, what kind of light does that shine before us?



PART ONE

THE CHARISMATIC FAMILY OF DON BOSCO: A PROPHECY OF COMMUNION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE POOR IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD.

*«The Salesian Family of Don Bosco
is a charismatic and spiritual community
comprising different Groups, officially established and recognised,
linked together by ties of spiritual relationship
and of apostolic affinity”⁴ that responds to a vocational call:
a true prophecy of communion for the young and the poor.
Charismatic family, Synodal communion, Shared mission:
three great aspects of our being prophecy
at whose origin is the heart of Don Bosco,
Father and Founder of the Salesian Family.*

⁴ Charter of Identity, 4.



1.1. Don Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Family

“With humble and joyful gratitude we acknowledge that Don Bosco, by the initiative of God and the maternal mediation of Mary, gave rise in the Church to a singular experience of evangelical life. The Spirit shaped in him a heart filled with a great love for God and for his brothers and sisters, in particular the little ones and the poor, and in this way made him Father and Teacher of a multitude of young people as well as the Founder of a vast spiritual and apostolic Family.”⁵

a) Don Bosco thought of us as and wanted us to be a Family

All members of the Salesian Family recognise the apostolic passion of Don Bosco who “to respond to the expectations of youth and the popular classes founded the Oratory conceived as a large youthful family” (1846), the Salesians (1859), the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872), the Salesian Cooperators (1876), the Association of Mary Help of Christians (1869), and welcomed the first Past Pupils (1870). To all the first Groups he “dedicated time, energy, formative and organisational commitment... convinced that the apostolic strength of the whole Family would depend on its unity of purpose, of spirit, of method and style of education.”⁶

Many others were added the Groups he founded, arising out of different socio-cultural contexts, inspired and guided by his charism⁷ and by the renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council.⁸

⁵ Charter of Identity, 1.

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Cf. Quaderno Carpanera. Words that on 20 May 1917 Fr Rinaldi addressed to the group that gave rise to the VDB: “The Superiors always welcomed these desires well, all the more so as this matter was truly in the mind and in the program of the venerable Don Bosco... who spoke precisely of two distinct classes of people, observing the same rule, one of which formed a community and the other lived in the world, in order to promote the spirit of the Congregation there, in the practical implementation of action.”

⁸ Cf. The Salesian Family of Don Bosco. Rome, 2020.



“Family spirit, familiarity, forming one heart and soul”⁹ were words often heard from him, thus manifesting his profound desire for a strong family in view of a fruitful “educational, youthful, popular and missionary mission”.¹⁰

b) A Family faithful to the charism received

The individual Groups of the Salesian Family have long been engaged internally in a serious process of renewal for a path of communion: the constitutional texts, life projects, statutes, and respective formation plans are a sign of this, but even more so is the vitality of their witness in the different local areas.

Even the Salesian Family as a whole has made significant progress in this direction. The successors of Don Bosco, especially after the 20th General Chapter, have animated, encouraged, accompanied and faithfully insisted on this spirit.¹¹ A milestone along the journey has been the *Charter of Charismatic Identity* and the practice of many shared initiatives in the areas of communion, spirituality, mission, and formation.

Here are the challenges for fidelity to the charism received: feeling and nourishing a keen awareness of the community dimension so as to think in terms of the entire Salesian Family and to be a sign of ecclesial communion; being aware of belonging to a single spiritual Family and being committed to *journeying together* with a shared sense of *feeling* and *working* in the Church and in the world.

Journeying as a Family is to live the very core of Don Bosco’s spirit and is an expression of being Church, the People of God. *Journeying together* (synodos) is really our way of being Church, of being a family.¹²

⁹ Don Bosco, Constitutions 1875.

¹⁰ Charter of Identity, 16.

¹¹ Significant documents have been the Common Identity Card (Fr Egidio Viganó, 1995), the Common Mission Statement (Fr Juan E. Vecchi, 2000), the Charter of Charismatic Identity (Fr Pascual Chávez, 2012), and the interventions of ordinary magisterium of Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, especially in the presentation of the various yearly Strennas. Cf. *Called to love with hope*, Rome, 2024.

¹² “To walk together is the constitutive way of the Church; the figure that enables us to interpret

c) The joy of journeying together

Journeying together is a source of joy: this has been our experience over the years. However, we must recognise how many times the constant call that comes to us from Don Bosco's own life, from the teaching of the Church's Pastors, from the sharing within the Salesian Family itself, struggles to be transformed into life due to the personal, cultural, social, and political situations in which we find ourselves, especially regarding:

- Living with a clear sense of identity and belonging to the Family as a whole (and perhaps also to one's own Group).
- Being spiritually united, understanding and appreciating the specific charism of the different Groups, and working together practically (unity of intentions, spirit, method, style).
- Nurturing and expressing the ecclesial sense of the Salesian charism.
- Engaging in true animation and in human and spiritual support for one another.
- Correctly valuing the identity of the Christian layperson in the Church and in society by consecrated individuals and by the laypeople themselves.
- Setting out on the mission, giving depth to the presence and commitment in the new youthful and popular agoras of our world, to work in collaboration with youth ministry and vocational bodies belonging to the Groups and dioceses.

reality with the eyes and heart of God; the condition for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. The breath and the pace of the Synod show what we are, and the dynamism of communion that animates our decisions. Only from this perspective can we truly renew our pastoral ministry and adapt it to the mission of the Church in today's world; only in this way can we address the complexity of this time, thankful for the journey accomplished thus far, and determined to continue it with *parrhesia*". Pope Francis, to the Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference, 22 May 2017.



It is the charism that urges us to radiate the joy¹³ of:

- Opening ourselves to the other Groups while preserving each one's autonomy.
- Being daring audacious and apostolically creative, stepping out of our *comfort* zones to respond to the challenges of the present moment.
- Recognising the identity of the laity, seeing them as authentic subjects (i.e. active players) in the mission
- Taking on our own responsibilities as individuals and Groups.

As a Salesian Family, all the Groups and members are called to assess the situation in which we find ourselves, to embark on paths of deep renewal, and to revitalise that family spirit that Don Bosco conceived us as having and wanted.

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. What prompted Don Bosco to open up to such a broad vision of his mission, involving so many diverse forces and making a true family out of them? Can his vision also help us to better appreciate our Salesian Family identity?
2. Are we conscious of the rich heritage of reflection and life that recognising ourselves as a *family* has produced within the Congregation and the Groups over time? What are the aspects that fill us most with joy? How can we help each other to internalise them and experience them more deeply?
3. Convinced as we are of the mystery of the *Church as Communion - People of God*, how can we help each other live and practically express this reality as the Salesian Family in the area where we operate?

¹³ Cf. Saint Paul VI, EN, 75.

1.2. The prophecy of being a Charismatic Family in the Church

The individual prophets chosen by the Lord gave rise to a prophetic community. The prophetic dimension of the Church stems from Christ. It is worth gaining a renewed awareness of our *being prophecy* as the Salesian Family of Don Bosco and putting into practice what it expresses.

a) Don Bosco, Father of a charismatic Family

The image that emerges from the foundational process of the Salesian Family is that of a charismatic, open Family consisting of numerous brothers and sisters, each with their own personality yet all closely united in carrying out the Founder's mission in synergy, all animated by his spirit. This is a real prophecy in the Church for the young and the poor. Much more than a simple human institution, it is a gift from God:

- a Family in fraternal communion, with its gaze raised to heaven and its hands ready to work in the world;¹⁴
- a Family that brings together various vocations, consecrated and lay, but all united and driven by the same apostolic passion for the salvation of the young;¹⁵
- a Family that does not fear daily difficulties, but decisively travels through the pergola of roses of the world, also accepting the thorns to proclaim the Gospel of joy and hope to the young and to ordinary folk;
- a Family that is able to appreciate all the positive aspects rooted in people's lives, in created realities, in historical events, and that is able to grasp the authentic values to be found in the world;¹⁶

¹⁴ Charter of Identity, 5.

¹⁵ Charter of Identity, 4.

¹⁶ Charter of Identity, 7.



- a Family that knows how to dream together, pray together, plan together, work together... and thus be a sign of prophecy and communion in which it is beautiful to bet on life;¹⁷
- a family that finds its roots in the Mystery of infinite love that unites the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, source, model, and goal of every human family; a family whose members recognise the primacy of God - Communion in their life. “This is the heart of Salesian mysticism”, Father Viganó said.¹⁸ Therefore we are called to be a prophetic expression of the Trinitarian communion which is God.

b) The fruits of the Salesian charism call us to shared responsibility

Every gift wants to be recognised, welcomed, appreciated, allowed to flourish. Members of the Salesian Family, amazed by the abundance of fruits that have arisen from Don Bosco’s charism, feel deeply involved in the growth of this gift of the Spirit. Everything in their life has acquired a new dimension: the face of God; following Jesus; the living experience of the Spirit; attachment to the Church; apostolic and transformative presence in the world, especially among the young and the poor; the conviction of Mary’s maternal help; family style... They have not felt merely outwardly involved but inwardly touched.

All this has led them to become new men and women, dedicated to the cause of the Kingdom in the different circumstances of life; to grow in the conviction of what unites them as a Family (baptism, mission, gospel humanism, Mary, Don Bosco, the Rector Major his successor, father and centre of unity...); to value the special nature of the specific vocation and mission of each Group that enriches the whole; and to realise an exchange of gifts in deep communion, convinced that “without others, the members of a particular Group cannot be themselves.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Charter of Identity, 39.

¹⁸ Charter of Identity, 5.

¹⁹ Charter of Identity, 10.

Each of the Groups of the Salesian Family and their members can say: “Like Don Bosco, in dialogue with the Lord, we journey together moved by the Spirit, experiencing fraternal and family life as in Valdocco, open and available, going out to the existential peripheries, becoming gift and prophecy ‘for’, ‘among’ and ‘with’ the young and the poor”.²⁰ This awareness of the gift and its fruits in us sustains us mutually and nurtures our shared responsibility.

c) The frame of reference: the Charter of Identity

The Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family is the frame of reference for the Family as a whole and for the individual Groups. It is the intrinsic expression of being and living the Salesian life, from the perspective of communion, mission, and spirituality of each individual.

Beyond the Constitutions and Statutes of one’s own Group, it is necessary to understand the Charter of Identity of the entire Family, to value it, study it, make it an object of meditation and prayer so as to keep alive the charismatic values that we share. When someone enters a Group they enter the Family as a whole.²¹ Therefore it is a significant act to present the *Charter of Identity* along with the Constitutions / Project or Rule of life / Statutes / Regulations at the solemn moment of making the profession or the promise.

d) The Salesian Family journeys together with other charismatic Families in the Church

“God is love”.²² The Church is the Family of God - Communion, the community of the faithful gathered in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.²³ All humanity is called to be a family, the home of the Trinity, in the civilisation of love.

²⁰ Cf. GC27 of the SDB, 2014. Introduction.

²¹ Charter of Identity, 10.

²² 1 Jn 4:8,16.

²³ Vatican II. LG, 4.



The charism, bestowed on founders and foundresses, tends to grow at various levels and expand through concentric circles, giving rise to a charismatic family.²⁴ One is not religious or Christian in the abstract. Charismatic families manifest themselves as a true Copernican revolution. The gift of the Spirit as lived in a charismatic family, is an important generator of coherence, enthusiasm, creativity, capacity for risk, and dedication even to the ultimate consequences in the purest gospel spirit.

As a Salesian Family, together with the other charismatic Families of the Church, we feel encouraged to be witnesses of communion, sisters and brothers (consecrated and lay) committed to sharing an intense spiritual life, responsibilities, and services that bring a fresh gospel energy for the building of the Kingdom.

The Salesian Family, as a charismatic family, feels that it is a bearer of significant innovations in today's Church, those of its own charism, and promotes its most genuine gospel-based resources. Together, as brothers and sisters, from the youngest to the oldest, we feel like sons/daughters of God with the same dignity and shared responsibility. We practice mutual listening and discernment, aware that the Holy Spirit generally manifests through the mediation of simpler and lesser brothers and sisters. This is a novelty to be found in the Christian tradition, that becomes a prophecy for the world.

24 Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated Persons, 21/11/2014, II,3.

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Let us share how we can help each other live and joyfully testify to the beliefs expressed in the *Charter of Identity*. How can we further develop the prophetic dimension of our charism for the good of young people and the vitality of the Church?
2. What place does the *Charter of Identity* have in our formation and mission? Is it a point of reference that goes beyond the symbolic gesture of handing it over at the moment of making our profession or making the promise or commitment peculiar to each Group?
3. How does being part of the same charismatic Family become concrete within each Group? Do real synergies arise between the Groups and with the other charismatic Families in the local area? Can more such be generated?



1.3. The prophecy of being communion in missionary synodality

The Salesian charism inserts all members into a profound communion that has value in itself (*“from this they will know that you are my disciples”*),²⁵ and in view of the mission (*“called in order to be sent”*).²⁶ Communion intensifies witness and apostolic charity. Therefore the Spirit solicits the diversity of charisms and journeying together: a missionary communion in synodality.

a) Communion and witness

During the course of his life Don Bosco needed everyone – priests, men, women, laypeople, young people – so that, united, they could carry out a more fruitful work on behalf of young people and the ordinary folk. Whoever turned up at the Oratory with a desire to help found the specific role with which to contribute to the common mission. Thus our Father, guided by the Spirit, initiated a vast movement of people who, living in communion with each other, shared his same passion for the salvation of youth. Don Bosco was inclusive. The intuition of the importance of unity and shared responsibility in the mission to which Don Bosco felt called guided his steps since the beginning.

Hence the commitment as a Salesian Family not only to *journey together* but to give the world a testimony of communion and unity for effectiveness in the mission. The sign of communion in love makes first announcement credible and valuable, everywhere! Jesus said: *“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*²⁷ It was said of the first Christian communities: *“See how they love one another.”*²⁸

²⁵ Jn 13:35.

²⁶ Mt 10:1,5.

²⁷ Jn 13:34-35.

²⁸ Tertullian. Apologetics, 39.



This Gospel appeal finds an echo in the Salesian Family Identity Charter defined as a charismatic and spiritual community,²⁹ called to live the gift of communion that comes from God,³⁰ and nurtured by ecclesial communion.³¹

Communion is the distinctive sign of our being Christians and is built up through the willingness to let ourselves be inhabited by the Holy Spirit, who makes us one body and one spirit. Mutual love, communion that we are able to build between us makes us signs, witnesses, and prophets.

b) Communion in diversity

The Salesian Family brings together a plurality of specific vocations united in the same charism. In the richness of the various vocations, the laity insert themselves in the heart of the world and bear witness to their faith with consistency in secular activities, while priests proclaim the Word and carry out their ministerial service; consecrated members enrich the married with the radical gift of their life to God and their brothers and sisters, while those who live the sacrament of marriage offer their testimony as a couple living the Gospel in everyday life; young people offer the freshness and creativity of their age, while adults share their experience and wisdom of life.

Communion implies that everyone lives their specific charism enriching the other with their uniqueness, while allowing themselves to be enriched by the specific charism of the others.

This diversity is a richness to be valued, by committing ourselves to know each other better, to mutually appreciate each other, and to collaborate to be a prophetic, witnessing, and fruitful presence in the world. This is how young people can see a united Family which

29 Charter of Identity, 3.

30 Charter of Identity, 19.

31 Charter of Identity, 26.



expresses itself in many specific vocations in which each of them, if called to be a part of it, can find their place.

c) Communion in synodality for a prophetic mission

One of the ways that best expresses communion in diversity and journeying together is through the *synodal journey*, jointly involved in a mission that has the flavour of prophecy.

This is not about adopting an occasional simple operative procedure, but of understanding existentially that *being Church is journeying together*, that *ecclesia* and *synod* are correlated. Journeying synodally requires, if necessary, changing the way of thinking, listening, relating, making decisions, acting, supporting each other, evaluating, witnessing, even structurally.

The first attitude to adopt for journeying together synodally is that of mutual listening and attention to differences seen as a richness for the entire Family. This implies a humble attitude that urges us to set aside our own certainties to listen to the other deeply.

The second step to take is to listen to the world, especially to young people, their needs and expectations, in order to identify together the possible responses and any interventions.

But this alone is not enough: it is essential to come together to listen to the Spirit, who helps us discern the signs of God in the light of his Word and shows us the paths to follow according to his will.

One discernment dynamic in the synodal Church has been “*Conversation in the Spirit*”³²

32 Cf., Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod no.32-42: “In its etymological sense, the term ‘conversation’ does not indicate a generic exchange of ideas, but a dynamic in which the word spoken and heard generates familiarity, enabling the participants to draw closer to one another. The specification ‘in the Spirit’ identifies the authentic protagonist: the desire of those conversing tends towards listening to His voice, which in prayer opens itself to the free action of the One who, like the wind, blows where He wills (cf. Jn 3:8). Gradually the conversation between brothers and sisters in faith opens the space for a ‘hearing together’, that is, a listening together to the voice of the Spirit. It is not conversation in the Spirit if there is not a step forward in a precise, often unexpected direction that points to concrete action.”



Here in summary form are the steps in this dynamic:

1. Personal preparation: entrusting oneself to the Father, conversing in prayer with the Lord Jesus, and listening to the Holy Spirit, everyone prepares their contribution on the issue on which they are called to discern.
2. Speaking up and listening: everyone takes turns starting from their own experience and their own prayer, and listens attentively to the contributions of others.
3. Making room for others and the Other: Each one shares, starting from what others have said, what has resonated most with them and what has triggered the most resistance in them, letting themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit.
4. Building together: Dialogue together starting from what emerged earlier to discern and gather the fruit of the conversation in the Spirit: recognising insights and convergences; identifying discrepancies, obstacles, and further questions; letting prophetic voices emerge, so that everyone can feel represented by the results of the work (the steps which the Holy Spirit is calling us together to take).
5. Concluding with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Journeying together as a Family implies mutual accompaniment, respecting individuals and groups who have received the same Salesian vocation. Journeying together as a Family implies animating one another mutually and making our own specific contribution, to complement and support each other's richness in order to respond together to the mission that the Spirit shows us.



d) Living in missionary communion

“The link which unites the members of our Family is that of a ‘mission to communion’”.³³ It is about living the gift of communion that comes from God as a form of Incarnation, emotionally and effectively inserting ourselves among the people with whom we live and operate, in the various contexts in which our mission takes place.

There can be many expressions of this: from a mindset and a lifestyle of living and working “*for*” to a sense of working “*with*”; from working “*outside*” the situation of the young and the poor to a collective commitment to acting “*among*”, inserting oneself into the dynamics of groups and fostering the cooperation of people.

Attitudes can also be enriched through the style of the *Church going forth*: from welcoming people into our own places (parishes, schools, shelters...) to sharing the situations of others by meeting them where they are. Giving of our time and presence are the simplest and most concrete way to cultivate communion.

Growing in the spirit of communion with the Lord and with others, especially with the young and the poor, awakens in us the capacity for listening and humility, urges us to step out of our comfort zones, leads us to walk paths of true personal and communal conversion. In other words, we become cooperators in God’s Work.

³³ Charter of Identity, 19, which evokes ChL 32. [Tr: note that the English should really read here: missionary communion].



QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Communion in the Salesian Family calls on *journeying together* among the Groups and with the Church. Let us try to verify the quality of the synodal journey within the Salesian Family in the local area and with the local Church. Positive aspect, aspects to develop.
2. Let us gain practice in *Conversation in the Spirit* by discussing specific situations in the life of our Groups. Could *conversation in the Spirit* become an ordinary dynamic of discernment?
3. What steps need to be taken to grow in *missionary communion*, that is integrated into the logic of the Incarnation, active not only *for*, but *with* and *among* individuals, fostering their active role?





1.4. The prophecy of shared mission

Evangelii Gaudium reminds us: “My mission of being in the heart of the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an ‘extra’ or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world.”³⁴ Here is a strong appeal to understand being mission and be so at the *heart of the people*. We are invited, therefore, to live the prophecy of shared mission, made of “unity of spirit and a convergence on the mission”.³⁵

a) All are called and sent, open to God’s novelty

All the members of the Salesian Family, priests, consecrated persons, and lay people, as baptised individuals, are called and sent into the world to evangelise, to be light, salt, and leaven through consistent witness, and to have, in equal measure, responsibility for the growth of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Even members belonging to non-Christian spiritual traditions or with different religious beliefs, like many past pupils and friends of Don Bosco working in the Salesian context, are called to place the human person at the centre, whose dignity must be protected and promoted in all its expressions and in all genuinely human values.³⁶

This is a commitment to the development of Salesian humanism that strives to give meaning to everyday life and to build reasons for hope and prospects for the future for individuals and society.³⁷

It is an invitation to build relationships of respect and love with everyone, to recognise oneself as members of the human group among which one lives, and to discover together and respect those seeds of new life that open everyone to transcendence.³⁸

³⁴ Pope Francis, EG, 273.

³⁵ Charter of Identity, 39.

³⁶ Charter of Identity, 18.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Vatican II, AG 11.



The Charter of Identity has made us aware that first of all, more than “doing”, we are called to “be mission” by being active in the various religious and cultural contexts in which we find ourselves. The diversity of the various Groups in living the evangelising passion of the mission, rather than hindering, motivates and encourages the construction of the Kingdom of God in a common and complementary commitment animated by the *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*.

Together, as the Salesian Family and with other Charismatic Families, it is possible to continue writing a new page of the evangelisation of the Church in the world. Let us give free rein to the wind of the Spirit while not knowing exactly where it will lead us; the plan belongs to the Lord and we are simply his servants.

b) Shared mission

In recent decades, the term *shared mission* has been introduced into ecclesial language. The Charter of Identity, as well as speaking explicitly of *shared formation*,³⁹ uses words that point directly to it: *exchange of gifts*,⁴⁰ *communion and collaboration in the mission*,⁴¹ *apostolic co-responsibility*,⁴² *methodology for collaboration*.⁴³ This is about *mission* that concerns all the Groups since the mission is constitutive of our identity, and it is about *mission shared* with many lay people and consecrated individuals who share intensely in the Salesian spirituality and mission, or are invited to share in it. In fact, a new chapter rich in hope has begun in the history of the Church and in the relationships between consecrated individuals and lay people.⁴⁴

At the foundation of this approach lies an ecclesiology of communion, a renewed theology of the laity, a rethinking of the relationship between

39 Charter of Identity, 39.

40 Charter of Identity, 10.

41 Charter of Identity, 19.

42 Charter of Identity, 21.

43 Charter of Identity, 41.

44 Cf. Saint John Paul II, VC, 54.



lay people and religious, a deepening of the mission, a new vision of the bearers of the charism, and the theological significance of *sharing*.

Indeed, from a perspective of lay people as simple *dependants* or *collaborators in the mission* we have moved to a conviction that *everyone is called* to live out the mission based on the strength of baptismal consecration and the commitment that arises from it for every Christian⁴⁵, thus opening up a new dimension in the relationship between religious institutes and the lay people who previously collaborated with them. This is no longer about carrying out a task or simple collaboration, but of *journeying together* living the same mission, committing to a common project.

An additional awareness has led, even, to taking on a vision of *shared mission from a charismatic perspective*. All the members of a charismatic Family are bearers and guarantors of the gift of the Spirit; by virtue of this, they commit themselves to the common mission according to their specific vocation. The mission, therefore, can only be a shared mission in the full sense.

Vatican II clearly stated that “there is in the Church a plurality of ministers and unity of mission”.⁴⁶ In the case of the Salesian Family there is a diversity of Groups with a unity of mission and a common objective. What allows us to speak of a shared mission is the common missionary consciousness and the need for *cooperative charity*.⁴⁷

Here are some of the consequences of this approach:

- The call for a constant attention to the signs of the Spirit and a continuous discernment to respond to the needs of young people and ordinary folk with the same passion, initiative, and apostolic creativity as Don Bosco.

45 Cf. Vatican II, LG, 31.

46 Cf. Vatican II, AA, 2.

47 Charter of Identity, 19.



- The awareness of being called and sent to carry out the mission as bearers of the same charism according to the characteristics and possibilities of each of the Groups.⁴⁸
- Communion “*in*” and “*for*” the mission strengthens the autonomy and originality of each Group, generating mutual collaboration and creating a strong charismatic synergy among them, without necessarily implying uniformity of commitment, nor participation in every single initiative in the area.
- The priority of evangelisation, understood as the proclamation and testimony of the Gospel that materialises in a variety of evangelical projects and services, particularly in human promotion and education.
- The opening to new forms of collaboration, alliances, or *networks* that respect the diversity and specific nature of each one and strengthen unity, both among the Salesian Family Groups and, outwardly, with other Charismatic Families and other ecclesial and social groups, in view of building the Kingdom of God.

c) Change of mentality: metanoia

This process of transformation requires an opening of the mind and heart, a genuine metanoia, a profound change in mentality. Particularly necessary is:

- Coming to the belief that no Group owns the charism, but is simply a witness. The owner is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, everything to do with the charism must be reflected on together, as a family. The points of reference are the Word, the Magisterium and Don Bosco. The Spirit of God, the signs of the times and the Salesian spirit must be present in different areas of reflection and decision-making.
- Enabling the growth of the charismatic identity of all members of Salesian Family Groups through shared formation that enables them to contribute responsibly and creatively to the common mission.

⁴⁸ Charter of Identity, 15.

- Realising that the shared mission arises spontaneously when there is awareness of being a Charismatic Family whose members live as brothers and sisters thanks to the Spirit.
- Practising the concrete method of analysing reality used by Don Bosco from the moment he visited the prison in Turin: a) observe, make contact with reality to be sensitised; b) reflect (through study, prayer, and spiritual guidance) to understand; c) decide to transform.
- Working in a network and in a complementary way among the different Groups to reach youth in need with a credible Salesian service that is true to the situations and needs in which we find ourselves.
- Adapting the structures of animation and accompaniment to the reality of an extended pastoral subject (educative and pastoral community, educating communities) in which all their members are necessary and complementary. Consecrated individuals and lay people together is in itself a testimony of missionary communion.

d) Shared and participative methodology

A correct *shared mission* does not just happen. We find its point of reference in the pedagogy used by God with his people, and by Jesus with his disciples. Essential elements are required, which we find listed in the *Charter of Identity*:⁴⁹

- Forming together: thinking together, working together, praying together
- Being educated and growing through project sharing
- Implementing approaches to coordination
- Submitting to reciprocity
- Accepting shared responsibility
- Achieving joint formation

⁴⁹ Charter of Identity, 39 and 41.



The Salesian and Church situation today makes us understand how necessary it is to transform our mindset and even make structural changes regarding our way of thinking, listening to each other, relating to each other, acting, and witnessing the charism *together*, synodally, journeying towards a shared mission.

The challenge is to promote a *culture of the Salesian Family* where one is educated, prays, works together, creating significant experiences of living together, spirituality, fraternity, and collaboration in common projects in the local area, respecting each one's specific vocation.

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. What motivations does this text offer to characterise the shared mission as a true prophecy for our time? Can we add additional ones?
2. What conditions are suggested for developing a spirit of shared mission? What elements of a participatory and shared methodology are already in place among us? Which ones need to be developed more?
3. Can we decide to take some steps to strengthen our particular *prophecy of shared mission*? Can we start some meaningful projects for young people?

PART TWO

STRUCTURES OF ANIMATION AND ACCOMPANIMENT

The family spirit climate at Valdocco reaches its deepest levels when the processes of animation and spiritual accompaniment touch the heart, in a mutual giving and receiving that launches the mission and shed light on the way of living the service to which some are called for the good of the Salesian Family as a whole.

To ensure regular and effective animation and accompaniment within the Salesian Family, we have at our disposal some coordinating bodies, essential initiatives, and meeting opportunities, and we are supported by the service of delegates, spiritual animators, assistants, and other qualified individuals.

The delegates are people who, in the Salesian practice of discernment that is special to the Leaders of each Group, have been called to carry out a service and generously offer themselves to take it on for the good of the Groups and the entire Salesian Family. In this exercise of discernment by Leaders, the members of the Salesian Family highlight the action of the Holy Spirit.



2.1. Preface

2.1.1. The rich and complex reality of the Salesian Family

Attentive reflection *on the Charter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family* reveals the rich charismatic and ecclesial reality and at the same time its complexity.

- *Rich* in terms of the number of groups, members, and participants, but above all for the quality of the values it contains (spirituality), for the apostolic energy that drives it (mission), for the spirit of family that characterises it (communion).
- *Charismatic* insofar as it is shaped by the Spirit of God in the heart of Don Bosco and accompanied by the maternal mediation of Mary to respond to the hopes of the young and the ordinary people.
- *Ecclesial* inasmuch as it is aimed at the common good of the Church: “as in the past [the Spirit] sent Don Bosco to the young and to the working classes, in the course of history he continues to send his spiritual sons and daughters to perpetuate the apostolate to the young, the working classes and the missions”⁵⁰ in and for the Church at the service of the Gospel.⁵¹
- It is *complex* due to the various aspects to be considered in its description: charismatic, spiritual, pedagogical, legal, organisational.....

QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Can we say that we have a deep understanding of the Groups officially recognised as belonging to the Salesian Family, especially those present in the areas closest to us? Can we consider taking further steps in communion, formation and shared mission in addition to knowledge?

⁵⁰ Charter of Identity, 14.

⁵¹ Cf. Charter of Identity, 14 and 17.



2.1.2. We speak of animation

“Animation in its original meaning it is contrasted with the imposition of external force. It designates the inner energy and activity of the soul, which gives life, harmony, growth and cohesion to all the parts of a living organism.”⁵²

Animation, then, is fundamentally concerned with the quality of all words and actions which should aim at the seeds of life, at the energy that sustains the steps of individual and collective growth, at rooting this process in the being of individuals and groups.

In the Salesian Family, the animation style must seek to strengthen people’s interiority, to instil enthusiasm for life, to restore the courage to hope or to help discover reasons for improvement, to revitalise the heart and open up to hope.

We are talking about a way of speaking and acting that always appeals to inner motivations, and seeks to bring out the best in people through persuasion, suggestion, encouragement, and, above all, through deep respect and consistency, and by seeking to nurture a personal and vital relationship with Christ, the only Saviour, and with Mary who anticipates and accompanies the most difficult phases of the journey.

There are two specific characteristics of animation: the kind of relationship that is established with people (communication, exchange, affection, deep communion); and the way of understanding this animation process (it is about doing “*with*” rather than doing “*for*”).

It is a style of expressing ourselves; not so much a methodology, but the clear manifestation of the essence of individuals, what ultimately the Spirit gives to each one “*for the growth of the community*”⁵³ and that drives them to be *salt*, “*light and leaven*”.⁵⁴ For the members of the

⁵² GC SDB 21, 46.

⁵³ 1 Cor 14:12.

⁵⁴ Mt 5:13-14;13,33.

Salesian Family, it is an authentic gift of the Spirit of the Creator God of new life, in which “*we are, we move, we live*”.⁵⁵

QUESTION FOR SHARING

1. Let us try to evaluate the quality of processes and attitudes in the animation of the Salesian Family in our local area: Which ones have we prioritised, and which ones should be courageously begun to ensure the growth of the Groups and their members?

2.1.3. We speak of accompaniment

Accompaniment means *being companions on the journey*, with the level of solidarity that comes from sharing bread, from *cum-panis*, and from the echoes that arise in the heart of a Salesian. Accompaniment and Salesian familiarity are almost synonymous. They are words that emphasise relationships of unconditional acceptance, closeness, true friendship, genuine interest in others, even at a deeply human and spiritual level.

Salesian spiritual accompaniment as a process where “there is an inherent complementarity between personal accompaniment and community accompaniment.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Acts 17:28.

⁵⁶ Cf. Synod of the Young 95.



Like Don Bosco, the accompaniment within the members of the Salesian Family must develop a process of human and spiritual accompaniment through the environment and individual relationships. It is not limited to a *one to one* encounter. It keeps a splendid balance between a healthy and mature environment, between individuals and Groups, and individual encounters. There are formal moments (group meetings, retreats, liturgical life, formation, life review... and also meetings between the guide and the one being accompanied), and there will be many informal opportunities (the typical word in the ear whispered by Don Bosco, virtual contacts, opportunities offered by the environment...).

The whole process of spiritual accompaniment takes place preferably within a faith community (such as groups, Christian communities...), open to the action of grace and the Holy Spirit. Regular and structured activity is very fruitful, but without the various informal interventions and the environmental support of the community, the effectiveness of the mentoring would be reduced, if not compromised. Overall we are talking about a *holistic* practice. The experience of the Salesian Family, with its natural family spirit, offers valuable opportunities for a mutual, serious, and profound accompaniment. A real challenge for all the Groups and members that deserves to be noticed and addressed.

QUESTION FOR SHARING

1. Let us try to evaluate the quality of the processes and attitudes of the accompaniment of the Salesian Family in the local area: Which ones have we prioritised, and which need to be courageously initiated to ensure the growth of the Groups and their members?

2.1.4. The service of animation and accompaniment in the Salesian Family

A gift of the Spirit, like that of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, offered to the Church and, through it, to society, demands to be welcomed, developed, shared, lived, made available, cared for... with fidelity, a dynamic and responsible fidelity.

Indeed, despite natural human limitations but with a passion for the gift received, the efforts of many have produced, over the years, a deeper understanding of the richness of the charism and a development of methods of animation and accompaniment that have brought many fruits.

Every Group, within itself, carries out a service of animation and formation, as well as, in the relationships between Groups, in communion with respect for the charism of each one. In this way, mutual animation of the Family is experienced which is made of collaboration, support, encouragement, and the sharing of each one's specific gifts. The service of animation and accompaniment, therefore, is experienced in deep communion with everyone and among everyone.

In this context however, we need to highlight that the Salesian Congregation has some special responsibilities for animation": *"Together with these groups [founded by Don Bosco] and with others born later we make up the Salesian Family. Within this family, by the will of the Founder, we have particular responsibilities: to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness".*⁵⁷ *"The Rector Major, Superior of the Salesian Society, is the successor of Don Bosco, the father and the centre of unity of the Salesian Family".*⁵⁸

The *Charter of Identity*, also, in specifying how the Salesians assume the responsibility of animation within the Salesian Family as a

⁵⁷ C. SDB, 5.

⁵⁸ C. SDB, 126 .



whole, emphasises: “they carry out a service which does not belong to the authority of government, but to the humble and joyful dedication of one who promotes a path of fidelity to the gift received, fostering its communication, sharing and realisation”.⁵⁹

QUESTION FOR SHARING

1. Let us try to make a more all-embracing evaluation regarding the quality of the animation and accompaniment service in the Salesian Family thinking about

- all the members and groups;
- the individuals who have a specific role in this field: strengths, aspects to be taken care of, possible methods and initiatives that help to strengthen this service.

⁵⁹ Charter of Identity, 45.

2.2. World level bodies or structures

2.2.1. The Word Advisory Council

a) Nature

The World Advisory Council is a meeting of the World Leaders of the officially recognised Salesian Family Groups with the Rector Major. The Leader (or a delegate) accompanied by a member of their Council participate in it, as well as the World Delegates of the Rector Major at the service of the Groups. Other people may also be invited.

b) Objectives

The Advisory Council meeting aims to promote the following objectives:⁶⁰

- Study and gain a deeper understanding of the figure of Don Bosco, his life, his pedagogy, his spirituality in order to know, understand, and to better embrace his apostolic project and his criteria for pastoral action.
- Strengthen the sense of belonging, encouraging direct and concrete knowledge of the different groups within the Family and valuing their specific identity.
- Propose meetings and formation experiences in common.
- Understand the pastoral challenges of society and the Church in which the Salesian Family operates, studying potential pastoral synergies, according to the specific nature of individual groups, and in communion with the same Salesian mission.
- Seek to implement, whenever possible, concrete apostolic initiatives shared by all the groups in the area.

The World Advisory Council ordinarily meets once a year and proposes to the Rector Major essential guidelines for animation for the following pastoral year concerning the Strenna, spiritual retreat days, and any

⁶⁰ Charter of Identity, 46.



other suggestions. Leaders of Groups are also involved in the drafting of any documents concerning the entire Salesian Family.

2.2.2. Secretariat for the Salesian Family

a) Nature

The Secretariat for the Salesian Family is a body of animation, formation, and coordination established by GC27⁶¹ and directly dependent on the Rector Major, the Successor of Don Bosco and Centre of unity of the entire Family, in accordance with article 108 of the SDB Regulations.

Its purpose is to be at the service of the Rector Major for the animation and accompaniment of the Salesian Family and promote communion among the various Groups belonging to it, respecting their specific nature and autonomy.

The Secretariat assists the Rector Major and the Salesians, “heirs of his charismatic richness who have the responsibility of animating the whole of the Salesian Family”,⁶² that is, “to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic fruitfulness.”⁶³

The Charter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family is the fundamental frame of reference.

b) Members of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is made up of the following members, appointed by the Rector Major.

- The central Delegate of the Rector Major⁶⁴ for the Salesian Family;

61 Cf. Regulations approved by the Rector Major and his Council on 21 October 2021, after the revision of the experimental Regulations of 29 January 2015, in which the Central Secretariat for the Salesian Family was established, directly dependent on the Rector Major in accordance with article 108 of the SDB Regulations decided in GC27 (Cf. AGC, 418, 79).

62 Charter of Identity, 45.

63 C. SDB, 5.

64 R. SDB, 108.

- SDB confreres who have roles in animating the Salesian Family Groups for which the Salesian Congregation has charismatic responsibility:
 - the RM's Delegate for the Salesian Cooperators;
 - the RM's Delegate for the Past Pupils of Don Bosco;
 - the Spiritual Animator for the Association of Mary Help of Christians;
 - the Central Assistant for the Volunteers of Don Bosco;
 - the Central Assistant for the CDB Volunteers;
 - the Postulator General for the Causes of Saints;
- four members of the Salesian Family Advisory Council among whom, at the wish of the Rector Major, an FMA chosen by the Mother General.

c) Tasks

The fundamental tasks of the Secretariat are:

- To collaborate in the development of the six-year project of the Rector Major with his Council regarding the Secretariat.
- To develop the annual work plan and the corresponding economic estimate (budget).
- To offer the Rector Major the necessary guidelines to ensure the fruitfulness of the charism in every Group and in the Salesian Family as a whole.⁶⁵
- To accompany the Groups in gaining understanding of the Charter of Charismatic Identity and in becoming aware that the Salesian Family must become “a vast movement of people who, in various ways, work for the salvation of the young”.⁶⁶
- To engage with the most suitable means of animation and formation for a conscious and vibrant development of the Salesian Family, with particular attention to the youthful, popular, and missionary mission in the most needy environments.

⁶⁵ Cf. Charter of Identity, 13.

⁶⁶ C. SDB, 5.

- To animate and involve the various Groups in the worldwide activities concerning the entire Salesian Family: the World Advisory Council, Spirituality Days, international Congresses of Mary Help of Christians, regional meetings, formation programs...
- To foster, in agreement with the Postulation for the Causes of Saints, the knowledge and internalisation of Salesian holiness as a call to live the apostolic spirituality characteristic of the Salesian Family.
- To take care of the necessary communication regarding the Salesian Family through the media and periodically inform the leaders of the different Groups about the decisions and activities of the Secretariat.
- To be involved, as far as possible, in any requests made by the Rector Major.

2.2.3. The central Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family

a) Nature

This role is described in the SDB Regulations: “For areas of particular importance which do not form part of the duties assigned by the Constitutions to individual Councillors, appropriate central secretariats may be set up depending directly on the Rector Major. The establishment of such secretariats belongs to the General Chapter. Their immediate responsibility is entrusted to a central delegate who is appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council and remains *ad nutum*.”⁶⁷

b) Tasks

His basic tasks are:⁶⁸

- To present to the Rector Major and the General Council the relevant section of the six-year project, the annual work plan, and

⁶⁷ R. SDB, 108.

⁶⁸ Cf. Regulations of the Secretariat (21 October 2021).

the budget concerning the Secretariat and the SDB Team for their approval.

- To annually inform the Rector Major and his Council about the implementation of the Secretariat's work plan and the SDB Team, and with regard to the progress of the Salesian Family.
- To represent the Rector Major, at his request, in any congregational, ecclesial and civil events where the Salesian Family is required to be involved.
- To call the Secretariat together at least four times a year to study, analyse, plan, and verify the progress of the Salesian Family.
- To coordinate the projects and activities of the members of the SDB Delegates Team.
- To participate in reflection and interaction with Sector Councillors so as to highlight the Salesian Family dimension in the overall animation and governance of the Congregation.
- To schedule meetings with the Salesians in initial formation, in agreement with the Formation Councillor, to cultivate in those being formed the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family and the charismatic responsibility towards it.
- To coordinate the Salesian Family World Advisory Council and Spirituality Days.
- To make the documents of the Salesian Family known to individual Groups and promote aids and publications related to it.
- To take part in Team Visits, regional meetings of Provincials in agreement with Regional Councillors, and to be available for animation visits.
- To take up any other task that the Rector Major wishes to assign him.



2.2.4. Councillors, Delegates, Animators at world level

a) Nature

We are talking about two kinds of people:

- People elected or appointed as envisaged by the Constitutions, Regulations, or Statutes of the Groups for the service of the animation of the Salesian Family within their own Group.
- People whom the Leaders of some groups request of the Rector Major or the Mother General of the FMA for a group accompaniment service.

b) Tasks of the first-mentioned kind

- To contribute to keeping alive in the Group the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family and nurturing collaborative relationships with other Groups.
- To promote communication exchanges between regional and local leaders regarding the life of the Salesian Family.
- To provide any guidance to the regional, provincial, or local delegates of their own Group.
- To accompany the members of one's own Group with roles of responsibility.
- To promote potential initiatives for:
 - ▀ fostering a deeper understanding of the spiritual heritage of the Salesian Family;
 - ▀ identifying and proposing potential forms of collaboration at various levels.
- To keep one's Group informed of important events of Salesian life.
- To promote a deeper understanding of Don Bosco's charism and that of one's own Founder.
- To promote with the Group knowledge of the various SF Groups.
- To participate in the meetings of the central bodies of the Salesian Family, offering collaboration according to the specific charism.

c) Tasks of the second-mentioned kind

- To deeply understand the identity and characteristics specific to the Group he or she is accompanying.
- To represent the Congregation or the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (in the case of Groups linked to them according to the Constitutions and agreements between both institutions) within the Group's bodies, and contribute to keeping alive the sense of belonging to the Salesian Family.
- To be available to the Leaders of Groups regarding spirituality and the formation of their members in accordance with their roles of animation.
- To accompany regional delegates/animators/assistants and provide them with any necessary animation aids.
- To participate in the most significant moments in the life of the Group (councils, assemblies, congresses...).
- To keep in regular contact with the Rector Major's Central Delegate for the Salesian Family.



2.3. Bodies or structures for the local area

2.3.1 The Provincial Advisory Council

a) Nature

*The Provincial Advisory Council for the Salesian Family*⁶⁹ is an institutional expression of the charismatic unity of the various Groups in the area covered by the SDB Province. It is a place for promoting communion among various groups and ensuring the development of the Salesian charism. It is the privileged meeting place for dialogue and common reflection. It becomes an effective tool for the planning and review of common initiatives, and a means to strengthen the vocation ministry and pastoral action of each of the Groups.

b) Objectives

Among the main objectives of the Salesian Family Provincial Advisory Council, the following should be noted:

- Strengthen the sense of belonging of the members of the Groups in the SDB provincial territory, communion among them, and their specific identity.
- Reflect on the educational and pastoral challenges of the territory and see how to act as a Salesian Family, or how to share initiatives with other church and civil groups.
- Develop (and revise in due course) the Salesian Family's provincial animation plan.
- Study and gain deeper understanding of the figure of Don Bosco and of the most relevant figures, especially of holiness, of the Salesian tradition who have had a special relationship with the area.
- Organise meetings and experiences of formation and common prayer (retreats, days, moments of prayer, celebrations).

⁶⁹ Cf. AGC SDB, 392.

- Undertake any common missionary projects in the territory (for example: attention to families in difficulty, promotion of volunteering, work for the poorest, spiritual accompaniment, caring for our “common home”, collaboration with parishes in need, joint vocational accompaniment...).

In short, it is a matter of finding a way to achieve what is indicated in the Charter of Identity to “think together, work together, pray together” in a climate of communion, collaboration and shared responsibility, respecting the specific charism of each Group.

c) Organisation

Below are some indications for organising the Advisory Council, which in any case must be adapted to the characteristics of each Province:

Members of it by right:

- The SDB Provincial and his Delegate for the Salesian Family.
- The FMA Provincial and her Provincial Delegate.
- Those responsible for the various Groups in the area.

Any members to invite

- A representative of other potential Groups who, with a clear Salesian spirit, have a significant commitment in the area.
- The SDB and FMA Provincial Delegates for YM.
- Other Provincial Delegates for individual Groups.

Frequency

A minimum of three meetings per year is recommended. The number of initiatives or the need to reflect on common issues may make it advisable to hold a few more meetings.

Animation of the Advisory Council

- The animation of the Provincial Advisory Council is part of the service of the Provincial carried out in communion with the Rector Major. The coordination of the Advisory Council is entrusted to his delegate.



Relationships in the Advisory Council

- These are, in the first instance, relationships of communion and spirituality in order to engage in a shared mission with the same charism, respecting the identity of each Group. In this regard, relationships with those responsible for Formation, Youth Ministry, Social Communication, and, in a particular way with the spiritual and vocational accompaniment team are desirable.
- It is also desirable to establish relationships with the relevant ecclesial and civil authorities.

Other organisational details

- Determine the length of term of office in the Advisory Council for the people who are part of it. Some members will remain in office as long as they have a service role in their Group. For others, it is prudent to specify a specific period, ensuring a reasonable continuity of the processes initiated.
- Appoint a secretary who, in addition to the meeting minutes, should keep a record and memory of the activities and take care of communication.

d) Particular situations

- Provinces that are divided into zones for regular animation, or whose area includes different nations: it is desirable to foresee delegates for each zone or each nation, who will act in harmony with the project and with the provincial delegate.
- Provinces in which the territorial boundaries of the Groups do not coincide: it is desirable to find the most convenient procedures that can ensure the Advisory Council's objectives.
- Countries with different provinces: it is desirable that they establish supra-provincial bodies for the entire Salesian Family as well as for specific Groups, such as national councils or similar.
- Broader geographical areas (such as Regions or Conferences): it is desirable to establish a coordinating body (e.g. Provincial as reference person, Coordinator, Regional Council or similar).

2.3.2. The Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family as a whole

a) Nature and appointment

The Provincial represents Don Bosco in the areas covered by his Province. His is a service that he carries out “In imitation of Christ and in his name , according to the spirit of Don Bosco.” He shared “in one and the same authority and exercises it in communion with the Rector Major”.⁷⁰ Therefore he is the father and centre of unity for the Salesian Family in the area covered by his Province. Precisely because of this he has concrete tasks concerning the Salesian Family: “sensitising” his confreres, and “promoting the sense of belonging to a common vocation” of the various Groups.⁷¹

In order to carry out this important function, the Congregation indicates that he can be “assisted by one of his delegates”,⁷² a Salesian or lay person. He/she is appointed with the consent of their own Council and with the expectation of a reasonable continuity of service, in order to create adequate collaboration with any other delegates and to promote a deep communion among all the leaders of the Groups in the provincial area.

b) Areas of service and tasks

With regard to Salesians in the Province the Delegate

- Acts in harmony with the Provincial and his council.
- Promotes the sense of belonging of confreres to the Salesian Family, their knowledge and their commitment; guarantees the information on provincial or worldwide initiatives; prepares and facilitates formation content; assists local delegates, promotes a deeper understanding of the Charter of Identity.

70 C. SDB, 121-122.

71 R. SDB, 147.

72 R. SDB, 36, 147.



- Works in a team with the other local delegates of the Province based on the geographic configuration of the Province.
- Maintains a close relationship with the delegates (or teams) for Youth Ministry, Formation and Social Communication to ensure an overview of the Salesian Family in their sectors and an overview of other sectors in the Salesian Family, and to promote shared initiatives, especially concerning youth.
- Ensures the development and implementation of the animation project of the Salesian Family in the Province in harmony with the project resulting from the Advisory Council and with other fundamental documents of the Province (Directory, OPP, etc.).
- Accompanies local communities in animation of the local Salesian Family in harmony with the local Advisory Council.
- Encourages reflection and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

With regard to the Salesian Family Provincial Advisory Council the Delegate

- Ensures, in agreement with the Provincial, the establishment and functioning of the Provincial Advisory Council in the spirit of its nature and its objectives.
- Engages with the most appropriate means to create a spirit of apostolic harmony in discernment, maximum consensus in decision-making, and practical cooperation in implementing the guidelines and projects.
- Coordinate the moments of the Salesian Family as a whole with the collaboration of the Group leaders (days, holidays, celebrations, retreats...).
- Work with the teams that may eventually form within the Advisory Council.
- Ensures the visibility, present and involvement of the Salesian Family in the area.
- Accompanies the operation of local Advisory Councils as necessary.

With regard to Leaders of Salesian Family Groups in the area the Delegate

- Sees to relationships and contacts while respecting the identity and autonomy of each Group.
- Promotes in all the Groups a deep sense of Family, mutual knowledge, and helps to shed light on or see to a deeper understanding of the common spiritual and apostolic characteristics.
- Encourages participation of all the Groups in common reflection, common planning, and common mission.

With regard to regional or world organisations (Delegates, Secretariat...) the Delegate

- Maintains regular contact with the SDB reference person for the Salesian Family in his region, with the Delegate of the Rector Major, and with the other World Delegates of the Groups.
- Takes an active part in meetings of regional or world Delegates online or in person.
- Contribute to reflection on topics of common interest for the region or for the entire Salesian Family.

2.3.3. Provincial Delegates (or the like) for each Group in the area

a) Nature and appointment

These are the individuals asked by the Leaders of their Groups to be the reference points for the Salesian Family in their Group at the Provincial level. (Eg: FMA Provincial Delegate, ASC Provincial Councillor, VDB regional Councillor...). They are appointed in accordance with the Regulations or Statutes of their respective Groups.



b) Tasks

Some of their tasks among others are to:

- Raise awareness among the members of their Group about their sense of belonging to the Family.
- Promote within the Group a deeper appreciation of Salesian Identity and spirituality, especially by the members in formation.
- Inform Group members about the initiatives of the Salesian Family in the area.
- Maintain fraternal contacts with other Groups.
- Collaborate with their Leaders in the reflection of the Provincial (or zonal) Advisory Council about the situation in the area to plan interventions in synergy with all the Groups in the area.
- Collaborate in initiatives of the Salesian Family in the area: common formation, vocation ministry, congresses... involving the members of one's own Group.
- Encourage, in agreement with the Advisory Council, the joint formation and mission in the Groups, where each one can offer the richness of their own specific nature (skills, experiences...).
- Any other tasks requested of them by their Leaders.

2.3.4. The Delegates that the Groups ask SDB or FMA bodies for to accompany their Group

2.3.4.1. The Provincial Delegate for the ASC

a) Nature and appointment

This person is the delegate of the Provincial for the Salesian Cooperators in the area covered by his/her Province. Provincial Delegates are appointed by their Provincials after consulting their respective Provincial Coordinator; however, the legal responsibility of the Association lies with the Provincial.

b) Tasks

- Represent the respective Provincials in the Association.
- Collaborate with the person in the province responsible for formation, offering their service of spiritual, educational, and pastoral guidance to promote a more effective apostolate of the Salesian Cooperators with regard to young people.
- Encourage local delegates to support taking responsibility related to their task of spiritual animation of the ASC and shared responsibility in their Salesian apostolic formation.
- Promote formation and update activities for all Delegates of the Province, open to the participation of leaders of the Association.
- Encourage the Councils to responsibly exercise their organisational autonomy by being in charismatic communion with the Society of St Francis de Sales and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
- Respect at all times the duties of the Coordinator and their own Council, without taking on responsibilities that do not correspond to their functions.
- Be a full and active part by right of the respective Council, ensure the “secure and stable bond of union” with the Salesian spirit, and share the charismatic and spiritual experience of the Founder.
- Maintain contacts with the Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family, and the Delegates for Youth Ministry, Formation, and Social Communication to promote shared experiences.

2.3.4.2. Provincial Animator for ADMA

a) Nature and appointment

This person is the Provincial Delegate for ADMA. The person is known as the spiritual animator; in the case of priests they are also the pastoral and sacramental guide. Both are appointed by their Provincials, however, the legal responsibility of the Association lies with the Provincial.



b) Tasks

- Represent their respective provincials in the bodies of the Association.
- Ensure the Salesian Marian dimension in the life of the Provinces through the most appropriate means of formation and animation, and the tools of animation of the Association.
- Make known the special nature of devotion to Mary Help of Christians and promote the Association.
- Accompany the Association's Provincial Council, of which they are a part, in carrying out its functions while respecting the lay character and autonomy of the Group, making themselves available for the spiritual growth of its members.
- Collaborate in the development of the ADMA provincial programme in harmony with the Salesian Family provincial project or plan.
- Work in coordination with the SDBs and FMAs who accompany and animate ADMA in their respective communities.
- Ensure the formation and spirituality of the aspirants and all members of ADMA.
- Pay attention to the local ADMA associations that belong to non-Salesian parishes and accompany their spiritual animators.
- Collaborate actively with the Salesian Family Delegate and participate in the activities at provincial level that require it.
- Promote the charismatic communion of ADMA with other groups of the Salesian Family, especially with the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
- Help the Provincial secretariat in obtaining the essential documentation of each centre (Decree of foundation and Certificate of aggregation) and, if necessary, initiate the aggregation link with the Primary ADMA and the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians of the centres not yet aggregated or of new ones.
- Maintain regular contact with the World Animator and participate in the online meetings organised by the Primary ADMA.

2.3.4.3. Provincial Delegate for the PP-DB

a) Nature and appointment

This person is the Delegate of the Provincial for Past Pupils, male and female, in the area covered by the Province. He or she is the guarantor of fidelity of the assassination with the spirit of Don Bosco. The individual is appointed by the Provincial in consultation with the President of the EXA-DB for a term of six years.

b) Tasks

- Represent the Provincial in the Association in his main task as spiritual animator of the Association.
- Help communities, all called to give life to their local Union, to “maintain friendly relations with the past pupils, giving special attention to the younger ones,... and promote opportunities for meetings, formation and collaboration”⁷³ even if they can only rely on a committed and responsible core group.
- Establish contact with Past Pupils until becoming their spiritual companion.
- Be part of the governing and executive bodies with the role of advising and supporting the past pupils, valuing and ensuring the leadership of lay people.⁷⁴
- Participate in the planning and coordination of formation activities for the members of the Association with the aim of taking on their own responsibilities in their lives and promoting the social values indicated by the Statutes of the Confederation.
- Be responsible for the animation and accompaniment of the Association, especially where the past pupil situation is not yet consolidated.
- Help the confreres, starting with the formation houses, to understand the importance and potential of the Past Pupils

⁷³ R. SDB 39.

⁷⁴ Statutes EXA – DB, 14e.



Movement and to learn, through direct study and contacts with members of the Association, their feelings, their organisation, and their activities.

- Ensure the presence of the Past Pupils in local and provincial Advisory Councils and their valuable collaboration in the projects of the Salesian work and its mission in the area.
- See to publication of formation materials, spiritual and cultural animation for Past Pupils, especially for the leaders, in accordance with their respective Presidencies.
- Involve young Past Pupils particularly (GEX) in the life of the association aiming like Don Bosco at the “virtuous Salesian charismatic chain” which works “for” and “with” the young: promoting their integration into the Salesian Youth Movement in agreement with those responsible for Youth Ministry, nurturing the mutual relationship between GEX and the Salesian Youth Movement, opening the GEX movement as the natural outlet for young leaders and volunteers who desire it.

2.3.4.4. Federal and Local Delegates for the EXA - FMA

a) Nature and appointment

The represent the FMA Provincial in the animation and formation accompaniment of the Association, in line with the charism, living and proposing the values inherent in the Salesian spirituality of Mornese. In the situations where it is deemed appropriate, they can be assisted by a lay figure, selected from among the associates and appointed by the Provincial.

The federal and local Delegates are appointed by the FMA Provincial.

b) Tasks

- Inform the Provincial/Superior on the life of the Association both for the Federation and Union.

- Encourage connection and dialogue between the Association and the Province/community
- Promote communion among the members of the federal or local council, fostering mutual respect and deepening personal relationships.
- Support shared responsibility and the spirit of initiative of the councillors.
- Collaborate with the President for the formation of Federation/ Union leaders.
- Maintain contacts with the Confederal Delegate and with the delegates of the Unions and provide guidance for their service.
- Promote the autonomy of the Association in communion.
- Participate in the meetings of the Salesian Family and the Church and civil organisations to which the Association belongs.

2.3.4.5. The Ecclesial Assistant of the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB)

a) Nature and appointment

So as to live in harmony with the SF, by virtue of the common Salesian vocation, the VDBs have asked the Rector Major for spiritual assistance at all levels, to be agreed upon with their respective superiors. This service is provided by an Ecclesiastical Assistant who offers his priestly, formative, and accompanying service.

The regional assistant is appointed by the Rector Major upon the proposal of the Central Ecclesiastical Assistant, after hearing the opinion of the Provincial and the Regional Council of the VDB, for a six-year term.

The local assistant is appointed by the provincial of the provincial area in which the group is located, for a term of three years, after hearing the opinion of the relevant local Council and the Regional Assistant.



b) Tasks

The regional assistant

- Takes part in sessions of the Regional Council to offer a contribution on formation issues.
- Takes part in discussions, expresses an opinion, but without authority or jurisdictional power in the region and without the right to vote.
- Is present, as far as possible, in all the formative moments of the Region.
- Coordinates the activity of the various local Ecclesiastical Assistants.
- Proposes the appointment of local Ecclesiastical Assistants to the competent Salesian Province for the region, having heard the opinion of the relevant local Council.

The local assistant

- Helps the VDB (Volunteers of Don Bosco) live their consecration intensely according to the spirit of the Institute, by offering his Salesian priestly ministry during the monthly recollection day and is available for the spiritual assistance of the sisters.
- Participates in meetings of the local Council concerning the initial and ongoing formation of the sisters: is concerned with the formation of the aspirants, in agreement with the local Delegate for Formation; follows the formation of the temporary consecrated sisters, in agreement with the local Leader; is responsible for the ongoing formation of the sisters in collaboration with the Leader and her Council
- Participates, as far as possible, in all the formative moments of the group/subgroup and the Region (seminars, fraternity days).
- Engage particularly on three fronts: priestly presence, accompaniment presence, and fraternal presence.

The Assistant in subgroups tied to the Centre, is also concerned with:

- Encouraging every aspirant to take responsibility for their own formation through faithful and active participation in meetings, and create, as far as possible, the conditions for the subgroup to become a group.
- Developing, at the beginning of the year, with the competent central councillor, the formation plan for the year and preparing a report at the end on the programme followed and the initiatives carried out with the corresponding evaluation.
- Attending to matters concerning the stages of the aspirantate, first profession, and temporary profession: presenting to the President General, within the established deadlines, the duly motivated requests from the Volunteers or any extensions, and send the required documents to the Central Secretariat.
- Presenting the President General any requests for exceptions for admissions and the reasons for any candidate withdrawals.

2.3.4.6. The Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Volunteers With Don Bosco (CDB)

a) Nature and appointment

“With their spiritual assistance, the Salesian Congregation with its spiritual patrimony and apostolic richness becomes for us a living fount and stimulus for our fidelity to the charisma”.⁷⁵

“The Central Ecclesiastical Assistant is appointed by the Rector Major *ad nutum* having heard the opinion of the Moderator General.” “The Local Ecclesiastical Assistant is appointed by the Provincial at the request of the Moderator General. The appointment normally lasts three years and can be renewed *ad nutum*”.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ C. CDB, 38.

⁷⁶ R. CDB, 45-46.



b) Tasks

- To be a guarantor of the spirit of Don Bosco on behalf of the Congregation and act as a bridge between the community and the Institute.
- To act in service of the specific identity of the CDB, promoting fidelity to the Salesian mission and their charism.
- Engage with those responsible for formation in the formation process of the brothers: discernment and initial formation stage, temporary vows stage, ongoing formation stage.
- To offer his priestly ministry: service of the Word and Eucharist; availability for Reconciliation and spiritual accompaniment; retreats; counselling.
- To work within a network of shared responsibility while respecting the autonomy and roles of others, and offering one's own expertise.
- To participate in council meetings with the right to speak but not to vote.
- To maintain relationships with the Central Assistant who coordinates the services and activities of the Local Assistants.

2.3.4.7. The Spiritual Councillor of the Dame Salesiane (ADS)

a) Nature and appointment

The Association considers the importance of the figure of the Spiritual Councillor as an animator of the charism of pastoral charity lived with a Salesian spirit. It establishes the role of the general spiritual councillor appointed by the Rector Major, the national spiritual councillor, and the local spiritual councillor, appointed by the Provincial of the area.

b) Tasks

- To offer formation and moral support, and advice (encouraging, advising, accompanying), without having legal powers.

- To participate in meetings of the Administrative Councils and General Assemblies (international, national, or local) and other Association meetings if invited.
- *Specific role of the general Councillor:*
 - Visit the General Directorate of each nation when requested.
 - Meet, at least every three years, with the national spiritual Councillors.
 - Propose seminars, conferences, and any other initiative to the International Directorate that promotes the formation of Councillors and the formation of the ADS.
- *Specific role of the National Councillor:*
 - Guide the National Management in the eventual pre-selection of the local Councillors of the nation, in accordance with the Provincial Management.

2.3.5. Other local structures

This concerns structures and procedures developed over time with the aim of strengthening the animation and accompaniment of the Salesian Family in the Salesian world.

2.3.5.1. Structures at the level of SDB regions and FMA Conferences

- Regions with a Provincial as reference person, a regional coordinator, a single regional Advisory Council.
- Regions with different Conferences, each with a designated Provincial as reference person, a coordinator, and a single Advisory Council (or similar) for the Conference territory.
- Countries with an Advisory Council of Provincials and a team of Delegates from the various Groups present in it.



2.3.5.2. Structures in ASC Regions

The Regional Advisory Council

- This is an animation body that aims to serve an effective apostolic sharing of responsibility between provincial councils and the World Council.
- The Regional Advisory Council is made up of the world councillor for the Region who chairs it; the provincial coordinators; the SDB regional delegate appointed by the corresponding SDB Regional Councillor, after hearing the opinion of the ASC Regional Advisory Council; the FMA regional delegate appointed by the FMA Mother General on the proposal of the corresponding Conference of Provincials; and any other Salesian Cooperators with specific technical support functions.

The Regional Secretariat (ReS)

- It is a technical body that supports the World Councillor, made up of Salesian Cooperators who will take on the role as reference persons in specific fields of animation.

2.4. Profile of each Delegate (or similar)

Taking into consideration the individuals called to carry out the service of delegates⁷⁷ (or similar) leads us to reflect on the essential traits of their personal, human, believing, Christian, and Salesian profile.

In presenting the profile of the Delegate, the emphasis is placed on the importance of being open individuals open to accepting the new wine of the Gospel and the Charism and becoming prophetic witnesses of the original experience of evangelical life that Don Bosco has left to the Church.

In fact, Salesian Family Groups need Delegates and Animators in a continuous process of inner transformation, with an open mind capable of being touched by reality to accompany new prophetic responses. Thus we see the need for continuous and updated formation.

The following description seeks to indicate some human, Christian, ecclesial and Salesian characteristics common to those who accompany the Salesian Family Groups, whether they are religious or lay people. The closer we get to this ideal, the better we can respond to the service of animation and accompaniment that has been entrusted to us.

2.4.1. A person on a constant process of growth to maturity

- They develop a style of openness and optimism, a hopeful realism with human calculation and trust in God, patient waiting and forward momentum, always accompanied by dynamic balance.
- They are proactive and resilient, knowing how to involve others and handle differences and difficulties in a positive way.
- They are able to listen and engage, feels in tune with others, communicates clearly and purposefully, and is available.

⁷⁷ The term “delegate or similar” refers to the individual who is appointed or elected by the competent bodies to carry out a service of animation and accompaniment in the Salesian Family for the corresponding level and Groups.



- They think and work with a planning mentality, with their charismatic identity, and they are able to support the participation of all group members, convinced that teamwork is the most important way to achieve the proposed goals at all levels.
- They encourage and make available their own personal qualities without feeling more important than others, trying to respect and manage their own and others' motivations and emotions.
- They cultivate a sense of responsibility and shared responsibility in animating the Salesian charism.

2.4.2. A person aware of being called by God for a service of accompaniment in the Salesian spirit

- They strive to make themselves loved, as Don Bosco did.
- They live in deep sacramental union with the Lord Jesus and strongly feel the presence of Mary Help of Christians in their life.
- They take care of regular moments of personal prayer and maintain a continuous attitude of spiritual discernment to grow as individuals with deep inner maturity.
- They pass on to others a taste for spiritual life and give quality to the support to be offered in the face of the novelties that arise in life and daily activity.
- This is about getting to know and reflecting in the light of the Word and the teaching of the Church on the social, cultural, and ecclesial situation for a better service of accompanying individuals and groups.

2.4.3. A person who has fallen in love with Salesian spirituality

- They are engaged in reading and studying the most significant texts of the Salesian spiritual heritage and, especially, those that refer to the Salesian Family and the Group assigned to them.
- They pass on a vibrant sense of belonging to their own Group and to the Salesian Family.
- They study the characteristics of the Group, understanding the spiritual and pastoral objectives specific to its identity in order to work with their brothers and sisters, consecrated or lay people, valuing their vocation and their mission.
- They offer significant formation space for the members of the Group that animate and accompany them in their growth in maturity and personal and associative autonomy in the light of the Salesian charism.
- They ensure that the style of governance and animation of the Group is based on a mentality of communion that promotes a shared formation and mission with all the members of the Salesian Family in the area.

2.4.4. Ongoing formation of the Delegate

a) Introduction

All this must be considered as an initial and ongoing formative desire of the Delegate (and the people who are called to this service in a specific area) to ensure unity and convergence. It is about living one's formative process as a response to the call to accompany a specific Group and as a service to the charism.

If all members of the Salesian Family are asked to learn *to think together, work together, and pray together*, much more should be required of those called to a service of animation and accompaniment. This implies, among other things:



- Allowing for a mindset of change. It is fundamental to feel involved in collaborating with the Groups operating in the same area.⁷⁸ In fact, animation and accompaniment are reciprocal
- Growing in a shared planning mentality, developing a spirit of sharing and collaboration among the members of the Salesian Family. The Salesian Family's provincial and local advisory council is the privileged space to grow in this capacity.
- Knowing and reflecting on the situations that need to be addressed to discern intervention possibilities and achieve concrete goals.⁷⁹

b) Priority aspects in an ongoing formation path for the Delegate

- Knowing and gaining a better understanding of the specific elements of spiritual life.
- Knowing and getting a better understanding of the Salesian Charter of Identity and the sources of Salesian spirituality.
- Knowing and getting a better understanding of the documents proper to the different Groups and Associations.
- Keeping up to date with the documents of the Church's Magisterium.
- Knowing the magisterium of the Rectors Major regarding the Salesian Family and keeping up to date with new reflections and guidelines.
- Gaining an understanding of the reflections and documents of the World Advisory Council and the Salesian Family Spirituality Days.

⁷⁸ Charter of Identity, 21.

⁷⁹ Charter of Identity, 41.



c) Some conditions for the development of their mission

- Having a reasonable amount of time available to dedicate to the Association.
- Feeling the support of the local and provincial community, first and foremost of the rector and the Provincial.
- Participating in events organised by the Salesian Family and the accompanying Groups.
- Considering the importance of helping brothers and sisters, and in general those who are in an early or specific phase of formation, to grow in a keen sense of the Salesian Family.



The journey continues

Dear members of the Salesian Family, as we emphasised at the outset, the aim is not to present you with a finished text, but a document open to further contributions and additions, so that as we gradually move forward in this service of mutual animation and accompaniment we may arrive on the basis of the rich experience we have had.

As Don Bosco used to say: *“You will complete the work that I begin; I shall sketch it, you will color it ..”*^[80] This is our wish! A mutual responsibility and renewal in the Salesian Family.

May Mary, our Mother and Teacher, teach us the art of animating and accompanying in the Salesian Family with the far-sighted vision, energy and commitment with which Don Bosco and his successors accompanied it. She walks with us. We entrust this journey to her. Have a good journey.

80 BM XI p. 289.

Personal Note

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Don Bosco, Father and Founder of the Salesian Family

Barcelona, Martí-Codolar, May 3, 1886

Prayer

Father and Teacher of youth,
Saint John Bosco,
who docile to the gifts of the Holy Spirit,
bequeathed to the Salesian Family
the treasure of your special love
for “the small and the poor ones,”
teach us to be each day for them
signs and bearers of the love of God,
cultivating in our souls
the same sentiments of Christ the Good Shepherd.

Ask for all the members of your Family
a heart full of kindness, constancy in work,
wisdom in discernment, courage to bear witness
to a sense of the Church and to missionary generosity.

Obtain for us from the Lord
the grace to be faithful to the special covenant
that the Lord has made with us,
and help us so that, guided by Mary Help of Christians,
we may follow with joy, together with the young,
the path that leads to love.
Amen.

