

## Missionary formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco (2013)

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DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

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*Il Consigliere generale per le missioni*

*Il Consigliere generale per la formazione*

Rome, January 24, 2013

Prot. 13/0033

To the Reverend

**Province Delegates for Missionary Promotion**

**Province Delegates for formation**

*For information:*

To the Reverend

**Provincials**

**SUBJECT: Missionary formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco**

Dear Delegates,

We send these reflections and proposals concerning the “missionary formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco”. These are the result of the joint work of our sectors for missions and training, after consultation with the respective Province Delegates; these find their foundation in the duty which the Constitutions assigns to the Councillor for the Missions regarding “the specific preparation and updating of the missionaries” (C. 138); these have been approved by the Rector Major and the Council on January 23, 2013.

We are acquainted with the missionary awareness which Don Bosco had developed gradually over his lifetime and which had matured through the sending of the first missionary expedition on November 11, 1875, and with successive expeditions. Similarly, we are aware of Don Bosco's “Reminders for missionaries” which the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez, had taken up again in his letter “The inculturation of the Salesian charism” (ACG 412, Rome 2011). We also see today the

missionary commitment of the Congregation, which is also codified in Article 6 of the Constitutions.


These reflections and proposals seek to keep alive the missionary spirit of the Congregation. In a time of globalisation and migration, we need to be open to pastoral and intercultural formation. The Church's commitment to the new evangelisation and ordinary evangelisation, demands that we continue to push the frontiers of first evangelisation. The need to establish international communities and Project Europe are a call to missionary mobility in the Congregation.

In particular, these notes offer a twofold purpose. Above all, these aim at the growth of missionary awareness in every confrere as well as the capacity to do missionary promotion among young people and the laity; we know the potentials of missionary groups and missionary volunteer services for pastoral work, which open the young people to a style of life that is simple and in solidarity with the poor, and which engages them for the cause of the Gospel and challenges them in their Salesian consecrated vocation.

Secondly, these aim at offering a curriculum for discovering, discerning and developing a true Salesian missionary vocation. Such a vocation is born, grows and develops as a gift of God, following the evangelising commitment of Jesus and through the impulse of the Holy Spirit; at the same time its historical circumstances require our cooperation.

We entrust these reflections and proposals to the commitment of the Provinces so that they may bear abundant “missionary” fruit during the imminent bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

Cordial greetings and thank you for your attention



Fr. Václav Klement, SDB

Fr. Francesco Cereda, SDB

Councillor for the Missions

Councillor for Formation

## **Missionary Formation**

### **of the Salesians of Don Bosco**

**Rome, January 24, 2013**

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

FSDB	Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco
GSSIF	Guidelines concerning Salesian Studies during Initial formation
CDSMV	Criteria for Discernment of Salesian Missionary Vocation
SSSC	Salesian System for Social Communication

This document seeks to encourage every Salesian through formation to keep alive the missionary zeal of Don Bosco, and enable him to be a missionary animator as well as help him to discern whether God is calling him to be a missionary “ad gentes”.

This document highlights the *contents, attitudes, experiences* for the moments of the formation. The contents are offered to highlight the missionary aspect of the formation experience; attitudes to be cultivated and experiences to be promoted are also indicated. These are contents, attitudes and experiences to be continually deepened in the various stages. Since the formation communities are located in different settings, the various proposals need to be contextualised.

At the end of the document specific issues are presented: criteria for discernment for the Salesian missionary vocation and formation of the Salesian missionary.

## **THE PRENOVIATE**

The pre novitiate is the first stage of formation; it aims at stirring up interest in and enthusiasm for the Salesian vocation; it offers an experience of Salesian community and apostolic life where pre-novices deepen their vocational choice; it helps the pre-novices to mature in various human and Christian aspects and fosters their preparation for the novitiate.

### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- the study of Don Bosco's life shows his zeal for souls, also expressed by the desire to go to the missions in his early years of priestly formation and which developed following his launching of the missionary frontier of the Congregation when he was much older;
- a description of the current presences of the Congregation offers pre-novices an insight into the variety of the Salesian mission in different countries and enthuses them in particular regarding the work missionaries do in different parts of the world, despite the challenges and difficulties they encounter<sup>[1]</sup>;
- the presentation of historical figures and present witnesses of Salesian life also offers the pre novices the example of missionaries from whom they can draw inspiration for their lives.

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- gratitude for the faith received, interest in study of the catechism, the joy of knowing and loving Christ and the Church, the desire to share his faith with others;
- openness to different social and cultural realities of their country and the world, to situations of poverty, to the reality of many young people who are like “sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9, 36), and thus the sense of compassion and solidarity;
- apostolic generosity which leads to a simple life and to the free gift of self, fruit of a Salesian spirituality that requires commitment to responsible service.

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- know the work of missionaries in one's own Province, in the local church in one's own country and around the world, for example through videos and visits by missionaries;
- be part of a missionary group in the pre-novitiate;
- experience the sharing one's own faith with others, with other pre-novices and with young people;

- commit themselves in catechesis and in the apostolate, stirring up questions about the meaning of life in young people, fostering interest in the faith, creating the desire to know the figure of Jesus.

## **THE NOVITIATE**

The novitiate is the beginning of the experience of Salesian consecrated life. The novices increasingly configure themselves to Christ the Good Shepherd, consolidating their relationship of love and friendship with him. By starting to live the consecrated life, they learn to situate themselves in the heart of the Church and place themselves entirely at service of its mission[2] As the *Ratio* states, "the service of the Kingdom, the witness to the Gospel, a sense of Church and missionary enthusiasm are all characteristics of the novitiate experience".[3]

### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- the study of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* with the intent of helping novices to understand the oratorian heart of Don Bosco as an expression of his missionary zeal and his apostolic inner life; [4]
- contact with holiness lived out by some significant figures of the Salesian Family, particularly by missionaries, and the reflection on the characteristics of their holiness in view of fostering the growth of a missionary heart among the novices; [5]
- the study of the Salesian Family with a view to broadening the horizons of the novices through collaboration and contribution of members of the Salesian Family and the laity, in the fulfilment of the Salesian mission, with particular reference to the missions.

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- the willingness to identify oneself more and more with the sentiments of Jesus, and with his commitment, so that all people may know the Gospel, and desire to see him known and loved by all peoples, especially by young people;
- the identification with the missionary heart of Don Bosco and the desire to become signs of the Father's love, especially for young people who do not know Jesus,
- the ardour of the *da mihi animas* that leads the novices to the total gift of self to God in the religious profession according to the way of life traced out by Don Bosco;
- a positive attitude towards the missions and Salesian missionaries and a growing interest and willingness to offer themselves to the missions, if this is the will the God in their regard.

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- take advantage of the possibility of insertion in the social and apostolic context[6] and express the pastoral charity for the kingdom through various educational and pastoral experiences, in order to have the possibility of "knowing and experiencing the world of the young, especially of the poorest";[7]
- foster prayer for missionaries and the missions[8], especially Eucharistic adoration and the Rosary;

- interact in a friendly manner, where possible, with young people from other religions;
- maintain contacts with some Salesian missionary, preferably of one's own Province;
- be involved in the annual celebration of the Salesian Mission Day, in the commemoration for missions every 11th of the month, and in personal prayer for missionary vocations and the missionary needs of the Church and of the Congregation.

## **THE POST-NOVITIATE**

The post-novitiate is the stage in which the newly professed Salesian strengthens the vocational experience of the novitiate for what concerns Salesian consecrated life; where he prepares himself for practical training, enters into dialogue with culture through philosophical, pedagogical and catechetical studies and integrates faith, culture and life.[\[9\]](#)

### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- critical and Christian reading of culture and events of the Church and of the world, in order to understand its implications today for evangelisation, especially among youth;
- the study of the history of the Congregation and the Salesian work, with particular reference to its missionary expansion in the world; [\[10\]](#)
- the study of the preventive system with attention to its inculturation especially in today's multicultural and multi-religious context; [\[11\]](#)
- knowledge of the phenomenon of migration and its social, cultural and religious challenges;
- the study of catechesis and social communication to learn how to bring the Gospel to young people, and particularly to those who are indifferent, non-believers and non-Christians;
- knowledge of the *Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation* in order to possibly start the discernment of a missionary vocation.

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- critical and compassionate openness to the social, cultural and religious realities in one's own country and in the world, especially of young people, and to listen to the cry of the people for a better life;
- sensitivity to the needs of young migrants, street children and youth at risk;
- interest and participation in the evangelising mission of the Church and of the Congregation and the desire to contribute to its growth in one's own country and in the world;
- the willingness to be challenged by the missionary call and the generosity of offering oneself with joy through a life that requires commitment, sacrifice and self-giving.

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- apostolate among young migrants, among the poor in rural or urban areas, and among youth at risk in the context of the apostolic experiences of the post-novitiate;
- organise and animate missionary groups in places where one goes for apostolate;
- have some experience of missionary promotion using the means of social communication [\[12\]](#);
- reflect on personally and in community the *Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation*.

## **PRACTICAL TRAINING**

Practical training is the vital stage of intense evaluation of Salesian activity in a pastoral educative experience, which helps young Salesians to mature in their consecrated Salesian vocation and to ascertain their suitability in view of perpetual profession. [\[13\]](#)

### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- the personal and community reflection and evaluation with other practical trainees on their life experiences and Salesian activities;
- direct knowledge of the life of the Province and of the Congregation.

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- the joy of faith and of love for Jesus and the enthusiasm to bring young people to know him, especially through catechesis;
- the passion of Don Bosco to propose to young people, especially those who do not know the Gospel or are far from the Church, the experience of the Christian faith;
- availability for the practice of the Preventive System as an expression of passion and joy in sharing the experience of the fullness of life in Christ;
- theoretical study and practical of the Preventive System with attention to inculturation.

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- set up and animate a missionary group among young people and stir up their enthusiasm to take part in various initiatives in favour of the missions, including missionary volunteer service;
- find ways to interact with young people from other religions in one's own context, and where possible, make direct experience in a Salesian missionary presence of one's own Province.

## **THE SPECIFIC FORMATION**

### **OF SALESIAN PRIESTS AND COADJUTOR BROTHERS**

The specific formation is that which completes the initial formation of the Salesian pastor and educator, along the lines of his specific vocation as a brother or priest. [\[14\]](#)

### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- the study of Don Bosco the Founder in his later years when he faces new pastoral challenges, involves numerous apostolic forces, opens the congregation to the missionary frontiers; [\[15\]](#)
- the study of the Salesian Youth Ministry, which helps to deepen the missionary dimension of evangelisation, that is, the urgency of proclaiming Christ and educating young people to faith, new forms of presence among the young, the Salesian presence in the country, attention missionary promotion; [\[16\]](#)
- the study of pastoral theology with attention to the documents of the Church on the missionary activity, theology of religions, theology of evangelisation, missiology, inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, and other related issues such as the challenges of globalisation, secularism, multiculturalism and multi-religiosity, immigration, popular religiosity and ways of proclaiming the message of the Gospel in today's context; [\[17\]](#)
- the study of social communication with the aid on how to make use of the instruments and language of modern media in proclaiming the Gospel and transmitting its message to the same culture of the modern media;
- the missionary zeal and dynamism of the priest by virtue of his configuration to Christ the Shepherd [\[18\]](#).

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- the bond of deep friendship with Christ which leads those in formation to conform themselves to Him and then to draw from him a strong the pastoral charity;
- love for the Church as the People of God open to welcome all peoples;
- the conviction about the missionary character of the Salesian charism. [\[19\]](#)

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- the experience of missionary work with young people who are followers of other religions;
- knowledge and the animation of the catechumenate program according to the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*;
- the summer missionary experience;
- involvement in Salesian missionary promotion at the local and Province level;
- the proposal of prayer for missionaries and mission to the sick.

## **ONGOING FORMATION**

On-going formation is the natural continuation and the necessary deepening of the Project of Life which was initiated and lived in initial formation and lasts throughout life. It takes place primarily in ordinary daily life of each confrere within the community and it aims at keeping alive in him the joy and enthusiasm of completely dedicating oneself to the cause of the Gospel.



### ***Contents to be emphasised:***

- the possibility offered to the confreres of the Province of the opportunity to take part in any formation program, conference, course ... which may help to the deepening or better preparation in some aspects of one's apostolic task, e.g. inter-religious dialogue, new evangelisation, ...;
- the deepening of reflections and guidelines of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples and of our department for missions;
- missionary promotion in the Province and the Congregation;
- volunteer service among the young and lay people.

### ***Attitudes to be fostered:***

- the desire to live up to one's task in order to give one's best in the evangelising mission;
- openness to new contents and methods that could improve the apostolic effectiveness in one's own context;
- awareness of one's frailty and poverty in the fulfilment of the missionary mandate and thus the need for meditation and prayer, self-assessment of one's actions, and a renewed determination to journey with more commitment and fervour.

### ***Experiences to be encouraged:***

- reflect and share one's experiences in order to keep alive the "the passion for the salvation of others, and the joy of sharing the experience of the fullness of life in Jesus"; [\[20\]](#)
- take advantage of study days and reflection made with the members of the Salesian Family and lay collaborators on topics relating to evangelisation and culture, commitment to mission "ad gentes", ...;
- use the instruments of social communication for a critical assessment of new and emerging cultures and value the opportunities they offer in the proclamation of the Gospel;
- learn new methods of evangelisation;
- animate missionary groups.

## **CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT**

### **OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOCATION [\[21\]](#)**

***"ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam"***

***Individuals or groups involved*** at various levels:

- The confrere who is accompanied by a spiritual guide and by the confessor
- The community where the confrere lives, that is, the Rector, formators, confreres

- The Provincial and his Council
- The General Councillor for the Missions.

***Counter indications*** of the missionary vocation

- The search for adventure and simple desire to change the place where one works
- Urged on by a third person: parents, confreres, friends
- Escape from one's own relational, personal, vocational problems
- Inability to integrate into the life and apostolate of the community. If such a confrere is sent to the missions, he will be exposed to a more demanding environment (due to language, culture, and other factors) and will only worsen, rather than improve, his situation.

***Insufficient elements***

- It is *not enough* to have some general missionary motivation like, for example, a vague wish to work for poor youngsters or in a poor setting ...
- It is *not enough* to have a superficial enthusiasm for the missions that is not accompanied by concrete attitudes of commitment, sacrifice, generosity, such enthusiasm will not last long.

**General Criteria** for Vocational Discernment – for the confrere and for the Rector and his Council

Three essential aspects: (1) Right intention, (2) free decision, (3) necessary qualities.

The necessary qualities are:

- Good health;
- Human maturity; sense of responsibility; relational capacity;
- Robust personality; psychological balance; perseverance in difficulties;
- Patience, understanding, humility, capacity to appreciate authentic values in other cultures and religions and to adapt oneself in changing situations;
- Supernatural spirit, so as not to reduce mission to something merely philanthropic or social activity;
- Spirit of faith; rootedness in Christ through personal and community prayer life, centred on the Eucharist, regularity in the reception of the sacraments;
- Salesian life lived with missionary zeal shown by his ardour in making Jesus known, especially to poor and marginalised youth;
- Profound love for the Church and the Congregation;
- Spirit of sacrifice; generosity; being contentment with the conditions in he finds himself;

- Fortitude in enduring fatigue and fruitlessness of one's own effort;
- Flexibility and ability to adapt oneself and to love life in an intercultural community;
- Capacity to learn a new language;
- Capacity to live in community and to work as a team with the members of the community, lay mission partners, the young;
- Communion with and obedience to the local bishop in overall pastoral activity.

## **SPECIFIC PREPARATION**

### **OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY**

The Salesian who feels the call to be a missionary outside his own homeland, cultural milieu and language group (*ad exteros*)[\[22\]](#), among those who have not yet heard the Gospel, where the Church is not yet fully established (*ad gentes*)[\[23\]](#), through a life-long commitment (*ad vitam*)[\[24\]](#), may offer himself any time to serve in missions.

Young confreres are preferred for their ease of learning a new language and culture and their spirit of adaptation; generally it is preferable to end the process of discernment of their missionary vocation during the post-novitiate, but it is also possible during the specific formation of the Salesian priest and the Salesian brother.

The 19th General Chapter also opened the possibility for Salesians to be missionaries *ad tempus*, for at least 5 years, "provided that they are considered suitable"[\[25\]](#). This can be done for specific and urgent tasks in the missionary activity of the Congregation or to help the confrere to better discern his Salesian missionary vocation *ad vitam*.

### ***Discernment***

The process of discernment is a gradual and progressive journey with the help of a spiritual guide. In this process, the candidate learns, like the Virgin Mary, to listen to the voice of the Spirit, to purify and deepen his motivations, to discern his qualities and attitudes which determine his suitability for Salesian missionary life. The community has also an important role in this process. For this process the *Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation* are used. It is also possible that the candidate missionary is given, for example, on a trial basis for a year, the experience of working in a missionary context outside of his own Province. This experience could also be useful in the discernment of his Salesian missionary call.

When, as a result of the discernment, the candidate comes to the conclusion that he is called to serve in the mission field, he sends a letter to the Rector Major in which explicitly manifests his wish and puts himself at the disposition of the Congregation. This does not remove the opportunity to specify his preferences or concrete predispositions for a determined mission territory, this applies in particular to Project Europe.

The Rector Major, through the Councillor for the Missions, enters into dialogue with the confrere's Provincial, asking from him and his Council a written opinion regarding the missionary vocation of the candidate, always with reference to the *Criteria for the Discernment of the Salesian Missionary Vocation*.

Having successfully completed the discernment and having obtained the opinion of the Provincial to release the confrere for the missions, the Rector Major assigns the candidate his destination.

### ***Preparation***

In the intervening period before departure, the Province:

- offers the possibility to the future missionary, as much as possible, to learn the language and culture of the place in which he is assigned, as well as take part in meetings or courses organised by the Conference of Religious or by the Episcopal Conference for candidate missionaries;
- offers the possibility of to know the basic concepts of cultural anthropology and the dynamics of intercultural dialogue;
- sends the missionary to take part in the Orientation Course for new missionaries organised by the Missions Department as an immediate preparation of the missionaries before the giving of the missionary cross;
- prays and invites prayers for the confrere who will be sent as a missionary.

### ***Insertion***

Meanwhile, the Province, to which the new missionary has been assigned, creates a welcoming atmosphere and receives him fraternally when he arrives.

To facilitate his insertion into the new cultural, social and ecclesial context, the Province:

- offers him at the start an orientation program that makes known not only the history, the culture and values of the country, but also the history, mission and the works in the Province;
- guarantees him adequate time to learn the language;
- assures him initial accompaniment through a spiritual guide who assists and advises him during the first years of his inclusion, listening to his expectations, deepening his motives, removing his eventual prejudices, helping him to draw up the plan of Salesian missionary life;
- facilitates his gradual insertion by refraining from appointing him to positions of administrative responsibility during the first two years;
- organises regular meetings, for example, twice a year, of the new missionaries with their formators, rectors and the one in charge at Province level and at the same time offers indications to the rector of the new missionary;
- gives him the possibility to participate in the Orientation Course for new missionaries organised either by the Conference of Religious or by the local Bishops' Conference in order to knowledge and be inculturated in the local culture.

After five years, the missionary is helped to evaluate his missionary experience, and in particular:

- his integration into the life and apostolate of his Province;

- its insertion into the local culture, especially among young people entrusted to him, his capacity for openness;
- a reflection on his apostolic zeal and commitment to missionary life.

Meanwhile, the missionary who is in the formative period completes his initial formation, is ordained to the priesthood and / or makes the perpetual profession. For those who are in the phase of practical training, the two years envisioned in the Regulations (n. 96), is counted starting from his educative pastoral insertion in the local community to which he is assigned; for example: the time spent exclusively for the study of the language or waiting immigration procedures are not to be counted as practical training.

### ***Formation continues***

The missionary inserts himself fully into the missionary work of the Province and pays attention to his continuing formation, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Province to deepen his personal relationship with Christ as the source of his missionary ardour, continually inculturates himself in the culture of the people in the light of the Christian faith and the Salesian charism.

Takes part in the various meetings in the Province (day of the community, meetings of the educative pastoral community and of the Salesian Family, and other initiatives), in the country (like, for example, courses organised by Salesian regional centres for on-going formation, meetings organised by the Conference of Religious or Bishops' Conference), as well as in the Salesian Pontifical University which offers the course for on-going formation of missionaries.

If he has the necessary gifts and if these correspond to the needs of the Province, the missionary is asked by the Provincial to take up further studies in missiology, anthropology and intercultural dialogue, inter-religious dialogue, new evangelisation, in order to render a competent service in the Province.

[1] Cf. *GSSIF*, 1.2; 1.3.

[2] Cf. *Const* 6.

[3] *FSDB* 366.

[4] Cf. *GSSIF* 2.1.

[5] Cf. *GSSIF* 2.3.

[6] Cf. *Reg.* 89.

[7] *FSDB* 367.

[8] Cf. *Redemptoris missio* 78.

[9] Cf. *FSDB* 396; *Cost.* 114.

[10] Cf. *GSSIF* 3.4.

- [11] Cf. *GSSIF* 3.1.; P. CHAVEZ, «The Inculturation of the Salesian Charism», AGC 411, 49- 51.
- [12] Cf. *SSSC* II, 3-4.
- [13] Cf. *FSDB* 428-429.
- [14] Cf. *FSDB* 446.
- [15] Cf. *GSSIF* 4.1.
- [16] Cf. *GSSIF* 1.3; P. CHAVEZ, «The Salesian Youth Ministry», in ACG 407, n. 4.2.
- [17] Cf. SYNOD ON THE NEW EVANGELISATION, *Proposition 9*.
- [18] CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Circular Letter “The Missionary Identity of the Priest”*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2011, n.2.
- [19] *GSSIF* 4.2.
- [20] P. CHAVEZ, «Address at the closing of GC 26» GC XXVI, p. 137.
- [21] Cf. *Ad Gentes* 25; L. ODORICO, «The Candidates for the Salesian Missions», in AGC 337, 52-56.
- [22] Cf. FABC Office of Evangelisation, «Consultation on Asian Local Church and Mission ad Gentes», ed., Franz Josef Eilers, *For All the Peoples of Asia*, III, n.5, Claretian Publications, Quezon City 2002, p. 222.
- [23] Cf. *Ad Gentes* 6
- [24] Cf. *Redemptoris Missio* 66.
- [25] GC XIX 18, *Orientations*, 2.