

*Regulations of the Congregation of St
Francis de Sales* *

August 29, 2013

*G. Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales [1858]-1859]*. Critical texts ed. Francesco Motto, Rome, LAS 1982, pp. 58-70.

The text presented here is the one contained in the opening to the first draft (*ms A*) known as the Salesian Constitutions, which had as title *Regolamento della Congregazione di San Francesco di Sales*, based on the critical edition by Francesco Motto, as will be indicated at the time. It goes back to a time which goes from 1858 until the beginning of 1859.¹ A few variants will be indicated, contained in the text of the Constitutions sent to Lyon to the Archbishop of Turin, Luigi Fransoni, on 11 June 1860 (*ms D*).²

Regulations of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales

The Congregation of St Francis de Sales

In every age it has been the special concern of the Church's ministers to do whatever their strength allowed to foster the spiritual good of youth. The good or unhappy future of society's way of behaving depends on their good or bad education. The Divine Saviour Himself gave us clear proof of this when he carried out His divine mission on earth inviting the little children to come to Him with special affection. *Sinite parvulos venire ad me*. The Supreme Pontiffs [The Bishops and especially the Supreme Pontiffs' *D*] following in the footsteps of the eternal Pontiff, the Divine Saviour, whose vicar they are on earth, have in every age fostered the good education of the young through voice and in writing, and have especially favoured institutions that have dedicated their efforts to this aspect of the sacred ministry.

In our days the need is felt much more. The negligence by many parents, the abuses of the Press, the efforts of heretics to draw in followers, demonstrate the need to come together to fight for the Lord's Cause under the Standard of the Faith [of the Vicar of Jesus Christ' *D*] and to preserve the Faith and good morals [*add* 'especially' *D*] amongst that class of young people who because they are poor are exposed to greater risk for their eternal salvation. This is the purpose of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales which began in Turin in 1841.

The times being so difficult and calamitous for Religion, the ecclesiastical superior, in a stroke of kindness, approved the Regulations for these oratories and appointed Father Bosco as chief Director, granting him all the faculties needed and appropriate for achieving this purpose.

Many bishops adopted the same draft Regulations for introducing these festive oratories into their diocese. But a serious need appeared in looking after these oratories. Many youngsters, already advanced in age, were not able to be sufficiently instructed just by Sunday catechism classes, and it became necessary to open weekday and evening classes for catechism. Indeed, many of them being so poor and abandoned, were brought into a Home where they could be removed from danger, instructed in religion and set on the path to work.

We still [do] this especially in Turin in the Home attached to the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, where those who live there are around two hundred. We do similarly in Genoa

¹Cf G. Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales -1859*. Critical texts ed. by Francesco Motto, Rome, LAS 1982, pp. 22-26.

²G. Bosco, *Epistolario. Introduzione, testi critici e note* ed Francesco Motto, vol I (1835-1863). Rome, LAS 1991, p. 406.

at the work called the Artigianelli, where the director is Fr Francis Montebruno: there are about forty who have been admitted there. We also do this in Alessandria where for now Cleric Angelo Savio is in charge: 50 have been admitted there.

The origins of this Congregation

Since 1841 Fr John Bosco joined with other clergy in welcoming into appropriately provided locations the most abandoned boys from Turin City with a view to entertaining them with games and giving them at the same time the bread of the divine word. Each House was set up with the agreement of the ecclesiastical authority. The Lord blessed these tenuous beginnings and the number of boys coming was huge. In 1844 His Grace Archbishop Fransoni allowed us to turn one building into a church and gave us the faculties to conduct religious services there needed to make holy Sundays and other feast days and to instruct the ever-growing crowd of boys that turned up each day.

The Archbishop came there on several occasions to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and in 1846 he allowed everyone coming to this institution to be admitted to Holy Communion and fulfil their Easter duties there. He allowed us to have a sung Mass, have triduum and novenas when this seemed to be appropriate. These took place until 1847 in the oratory known as the Oratory of St Francis de Sales. That year, given the growing number of boys, and given the inadequate size of the current church, again with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority we opened a second oratory in another corner of the city, known as the St Aloysius oratory, which had the same purpose as the earlier oratory.

When these two locales became insufficient, another was opened on another side of the city in 1850, under the title of the Guardian Angel.

Given the usual gathering of boys in the festive oratories, the day and evening schools, and the ever-increasing number of boys who have been taken in to live there, the Lord's harvest has become particularly abundant. So to preserve the unity of spirit and discipline on which the good results of the oratories depends, since 1844 some ecclesiastics have come together to form a kind of Congregation, helping one another through mutual example and instruction.

They have taken no vow properly so-called; they have all limited themselves to a simple promise to be concerned only with what their superior judges to be for the greater glory of God and to their neighbour's advantage. They recognise their superior in the person of Fr John Bosco. Although they have not made vows, in practice they observe the rules that are laid down here. There are fifteen individuals who presently profess these rules, viz., 5 priests, 8 clerics, 2 laymen.