



# Salesian Co-operators

Don Bosco, while working with the poor and needy youngsters realized that apart from a Salesian congregation, a few lay people of the society were needed to contribute to the salvation of the young who were 'that part of human society which is so exposed and yet so rich in promise'. So he enlisted the help of several people and a few local priests. In 1876, with the help of Pope Pius IX, Don Bosco formed the Association of Salesian Co-operators.

The core of the Salesian co-operators' commitment is to live their lives as good Catholics. The Salesian co-operators embrace a Gospel way of life sharing in the mission of the church to bring Christ to society, especially to the young.

To give reality to Don Bosco's dream of having co-operators in all countries and to provide succour to the spiritually destitute youngsters, on the feast of St. John Bosco, 1940, the first meeting of the Salesian co-operators took place at the Grail Club, presided over by the Archbishop Perier, the greatest co-operator of the Salesians in India. Fr. Vincent Scuderi (Provincial) explained what the association was, its objective and its work. In 1975, Don Bosco Liliuah was proud to proclaim its own Association of Salesian Co-operators.



**“The work of the Co-operators will extend to every country; it will spread throughout Christianity... The hand of God sustains it! The Co-operators will be the ones who foster the Catholic spirit... You may think my idea is Utopian, but I stand by it nevertheless!” Don Bosco**



Formed with the motto, 'Da Mihi Animas' (Give Me Souls), it currently has 8 members. Rev. Fr. A. J. Sebastian SDB, was its first delegate, with Mr. Thomas Dias as the first co-coordinator. The current delegate is the Rector, Rev. Fr Biji Thomas.

The council has been holding regular monthly meetings, animation programmes and spiritual exercises for the Catholic community living in and around Liluah. Yearly visits are paid to homes of the mentally and physically challenged, the elderly and to orphanages. Clinical check ups for the poor Night School students of DBL have been undertaken on a regular basis. To aid the poor children of a missionary school at Chandmari, Belur, a tube-well has been sunk to provide clean and potable water. Bed sheets have been provided to the poor blind children of a home in Thakurpukur and wheel chairs have been supplied to some physically challenged youth at Krishnanagar.

One of the works of the Apostolate (an ancillary of the co-operators' wing) is to support the education of a seminarian towards promoting vocation to priesthood. Every year a token gift is handed over in recognition of the services of a missionary priest. The apostolate makes Christian news bulletins and magazines available to the Christian community every Sunday. Collegiality and solidarity with the province is shown by taking part in all the programmes organized by the province like retreats, recollections, joint formations, Pope's Day (AGM Day), Salesian Family Day, etc.

The co-operators have been working tirelessly to help the marginalized but the grief lies in the fact that their number has dwindled. Many of the members were teachers in Don Bosco School, Liluah. While some of them have retired from their job, some have joined their local unit and a few of them have answered the final call of the Lord. The lay co-operators fulfil their commitment and live the Salesian spirit according to their state of life and spread their values in their environment.



*School Canteen run by the Salesian Cooperators*