

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

The article in the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales that begins Part Three, 'Formed for the mission of educators and pastors', offers us the evangelical, ecclesial and Salesian horizon within which 'The Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco – Principles and Norms – *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum*' is situated and must be understood.

Jesus called his Apostles individually to be with him, and to be sent forth to preach the gospel. Patiently and lovingly he prepared them and gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into the fullness of Truth. He calls us too to live out in the Church our Founder's project as apostles of the young. We respond to this call by committing ourselves to an adequate and ongoing formation for which the Lord daily gives us his grace (C 96).

The *Ratio* is a text to be read and understood, but above all it is a process to be entered into and made one's own, following the example of the first followers of the gospel and those who first accepted and passed on Don Bosco's charism by embracing Salesian life. Hence the choice of this date, 26 January, for the official promulgation of the document. It is, in fact, the seed from which the process that gradually led to the birth of our Congregation began. This is testified to by the person who would later be called to become Don Bosco's first successor. On 26 January 1854, when he was just 16 years old, while preparations were being made for the feast of St Francis de Sales, patron saint of the Oratory, which was then celebrated on 29 January, he wrote:

On the evening of 26 January 1854 we gathered in Don Bosco's room: Don Bosco, Rocchietti, Artiglia, Cagliari and Rua; we were invited to engage, with the help of God and of St Francis de Sales, in an experiment in the practical exercise of charity towards our neighbour, in order eventually to make a promise and later, if possible and appropriate, a vow of it to the Lord. From that evening the name Salesians was given to those who chose and would in the future choose to engage in such an exercise.

It is a date with strong symbolic value which urges us to resume our formation journey with renewed enthusiasm, whatever stage of life we find ourselves in. That 'practical exercise of charity towards our neighbour', which in fact became a promise and vow to the Lord, has come down to us as the Salesian vocation and mission with all the richness of holiness and history that has marked the decades of the Congregation's existence until today, a day in which we are actors and witnesses.

The impulse that led to the process of revising and rewriting the text of this fifth edition of the *Ratio* was inspired by the same humble yet fruitful origins as in 1854.

In his address to GC28, speaking of the ‘Valdocco option,’ Pope Francis indicated a clear direction for the future of formation: ‘It is important to say that we are not formed for the mission, but that we are formed in the mission. Our whole life revolves around it, with its choices and priorities. Initial and ongoing formation cannot be a prior, parallel or separate instance of the identity and sensitivity of the disciple. The mission *inter gentes* is our best school: beginning with this we pray, reflect, study and rest’ [Rome Lateran, 4 March 2020].

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, in his action programme for the Congregation following GC28, asked the Formation Sector to carry out ‘a serious and demanding work of updating the *Ratio*, strengthening the aspects that favour integration between formation and mission and prevent a gap from forming between the two dimensions’ [AGC 433, p 34].

Today, the mission is shared with many people who, in various ways, are involved in the same educational passion that Don Bosco continues to convey through his charism. But precisely because of this growing closeness to a large number of lay people and members of the Salesian Family throughout the world, which reflects the synodal and communal ecclesiology that animates the Church, we Salesians are asked for ever greater fidelity and charismatic transparency. Living the ‘promise’ and ‘vow’ that distinguish us as consecrated Salesians is the ‘form’ in which we can best contribute to the mission, renewing it and making it ever more fruitful from within.

The *Ratio* guides us on this journey. It presents the fundamental guidelines and directives for formation in Salesian apostolic religious life. It is the normative document that ‘sets out in an integral and instructive way the coherent set of principles and norms concerning formation which are found in the Constitutions, General Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation’ (R 88).

Consequently, having obtained the approval of the General Council on 22 December 2025 in accordance with Article 88 of the General Regulations, and by virtue of my authority, I hereby promulgate today, 26 January 2026, the fifth edition of ‘The Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco – Principles and Norms – *Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutionis et Studiorum*’.

The third part of the text includes the *Criteria and norms for Salesian vocational discernment – Admissions* which had been published separately in the previous edition. They are now rewritten in line with the two previous parts.

The provisions contained in this text come into force according to universal law and must be faithfully observed throughout the Congregation.

The *Ratio* represents an element of cohesion for our Congregation in the great variety of its contexts throughout the world. It is my desire and that of the General Council that this reference text be followed by tools and aids capable of promoting inculturation and the dissemination of formation processes in the different realities and stages of Salesian life.

The new Ratio is part of our ongoing response to God's love and is the fruit of the collaboration and generosity of countless confreres and lay people who share our spirit and mission. As it is presented to the Congregation, we invoke the intercession of Mary Immaculate Help of Christians, St Joseph, St Francis de Sales, Don Bosco and all the glorified members of our Congregation, Family and Salesian Movement. May they support us in our commitment to live Don Bosco's dream and to dedicate our lives to the service of those to whom God sends us.

Rome, 26 January 2026

Father Fabio Attard
Rector Major