

Interior Rule Of the St. Francis de Sales Association

Voted on and approved by the General Assembly of The St. Francis de Sales Association May 30 – June 2, 2003. Accepted by Pontifical Council for the Laity with Statutes of the Association in April 2007.

With changes adopted by the 2009, 2015 General Assemblies

St. Francis de Sales Association

57-59 rue Leon Frot 75011 Paris, France, 75011

INTERIOR RULE
OF THE ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ASSOCIATION

General Assembly 2003

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INTERIOR RULE OF
THE ST. FRANCIS DE SALES ASSOCIATION

Adopted by the 2003 General Assembly-with amendments of 2009 G.A.

THE ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS

CHAPTER I

SPIRIT OF THE ASSOCIATION

1. The motto of the St. Francis de Sales Association is: “Love is the fulfillment of the Law.” (Rom. 13:10).
2. The Association calls its members to deepen their life of union with God by prayer, meditation, and the Sacramental life, so that they may witness the Gospels in their daily lives.

It calls its members to be open to the Holy Spirit and to take the Virgin Mary as a model. It calls its members to take part in the mission of the Church and in the life of the world. It offers them a commitment rooted in their Baptismal Consecration with:

- A means of formation according to the Gospels, Salesian spirituality and Catholic doctrine, a continuing and permanent conversion.
- Spiritual friendship according to the spirit of St. Francis de Sales through personal contact and as members of a Group.
- A Rule of Life, which is intended to be a help and support.
- A publication, to guide reflection and prayer and give news of the spiritual family throughout the world.

CHAPTER II

METHODS FOR ADMISSION OF MEMBERS (See Art.3 & 53, 2nd Part Statutes)

3. The General Council delegates to the Regional Directresses the authority to admit a member to each of the stages of formation according to the following directives:
 - The person, after having been welcomed and informed by an Associate of a Group or a Region, is admitted to the time of discovery and initiation, the

Aspirantship. It lasts at least three months.

- At the end of the time of Aspirantship, the person is admitted to a time of formation that consists of two steps, each lasting approximately a year. Duration of the time of formation should ordinarily not last more than four years, or less than two.
 - To be admitted to each of the steps, the person in charge of the individual's formation (Probatrice/Companion) sends a written, detailed application to the Directress of the Group who gives her opinion and sends it to the Regional Directress who makes the decision concerning admission.
 - During the final step of formation, the Probatrice and the Group Directress propose definitive admission to the Regional Directress by the same procedure.
4. The Regional Directress, in the name of the General Directress and her Council, makes the decision regarding definitive admissions to the Association.
 5. The Regional Directress asks the future member to write to the General Directress to inform her of her intention to freely make her commitment to this spiritual life and the reasons that motivate her.
 6. While guarding the basic principles given by the General Council, in accord with the Documents of the Church, and the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the programs of formation are adapted for each region of the world and take into consideration the age, culture and other characteristics of the members.
 7. The person's response to the call to live the fullness of the Baptismal Consecration in the lay state and to renew the commitments of Baptism are expressed in the Salesian Consecration.

CHAPTER III

THE RULE OF LIFE (See Art. 11, 2nd Part of Statutes)

8. The Rule of Life is a bond and a means of unity for the spiritual family, whose members are widely scattered in different countries of the world. It is also a guide and support which aids the Associates to grow towards a life ever more open to the love of the Lord and to love of neighbor.

Flexible in the practices it asks of the members, since it is intended for lay people who are living many diverse life-styles, the Rule of Life's spirit is nevertheless urgent. It is the urgency of love.

In its emphasis on the essential, the rule of Life formulates an invitation to live the Gospels:

-according to the Spirit of Jesus,

- in the Church and in the world,
- as a disciple of St. Francis de Sales,
- with Mary, Mother of the Church and our mother, in a spiritual family.

9. So that the Associates may generously live their Salesian Consecration, they are asked to:

- Renew three Probations each year (Art. 8, Part II of Statutes),
which are chosen by the General Council, for the purpose of deepening and actualizing in their lives the topic chosen.
- Make a yearly retreat, preferable Salesian and of three days if possible, to renew their union with Christ.
- To participate in days of recollection and meetings of the Group unless legitimately prohibited.
- To make the Novena to the Holy Spirit from Ascension to Pentecost;
- To read and meditate on the Rule of Life, in part or whole, each month.

Every seven years, a year is dedicated to renewing the probations of the time of initial formation.

CHAPTER IV

FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION IN THE OPERATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

(See art. 66, 2nd Part of the Statutes)

10. The yearly Salesian Pence for each member is the sign that she belongs to the St. Francis de Sales Association. It is also a testament to her adult commitment to the international Salesian family.

The financial participation of each member allows the Association to meet its expenses on the regional, national and international levels, in a spirit of mutual support and friendship.

Each member sends the yearly offering during the month of March of the current year. The amount is left to the generosity of each one, relative to her family situation and resources, but taking into account the needs indicated by the local, regional and international persons in charge.

Except in an exceptional or particular case, non-payment of the Salesian offering means one's name will be stricken from the list of the Association after three years failure to participate.

Offerings over and above the yearly donation may be sent independently of this timetable.

PARTICULAR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

OF VARIOUS OFFICE HOLDERS

CHAPTER V

THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS (See Art. 29-33, 2nd Part of Statutes)

11. The General Directress has regular contacts with the Regions and Groups through the intermediary of the Territorial Councilors. All Associates who wish to may communicate with their Councilor directly to request her help in resolving difficulties which may occur on the Group or Regional level.

The General Directress participates as far as possible in organized sessions of the Association. Her mission also is to visit the different Regions of the Association. An Assistant or another member of the General Council may represent her.

CHAPTER VI

THE GENERAL COUNCILORS (Art. 41, 2nd Part of Statutes)

12. General Councilors, like the General Directress, are ex-officio members of the General Assembly (Cf. Art. 71, 2nd Part of the Statutes). If for some serious reason, any one of them is not able to attend the General Assembly, she may designate in writing, another Councilor to vote her proxy. Any one councilor may vote no more than two proxies.

CHAPTER VII

THE GENERAL PROBATRICE (See art. 37-39 2nd part of Statutes)

13. The General Probatrice guides the Probatrices in the exercise of their mission. She makes certain that meetings of formation are regularly organized for Probatrices and future Probatrices in the different Regions.

14. The Auxiliaries assist the General Probatrice in her duties of formation of Future Probatrices. If necessary the General Probatrice may propose for the Council to appoint a Coordinator of Auxiliaries for a group of Regions most likely assembled by language.

The term of the Auxiliary Coordinator is three years, renewable two times. She is responsible for organizing and monitoring the formation of Future Probatrices and communicating regularly with the General Probatrice to keep her informed. She will gather a small team, formed in agreement with the General Probatrice.

The General Probatrice writes a letter of mission to new Probatrices at the end of their

formation, in the name of the General Council.

The General Probatrice may delegate to the Coordinator and her team, with the help of the Regional Directresses, the organization of formation meetings for Auxiliaries, Probatrices and Future Probatrices.

In other Regions, the General Probatrice assigns the duties of the Coordinator and her team to the Regional Directresses.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GENERAL SPIRITUAL ADVISOR (Art. 43, 2nd part of Statutes)

15. The process of choosing a new General Spiritual Advisor should, if possible, be initiated two years before the expiration of his mandate, during the Plenary Session. (Joint meeting of the Councils of the Religious & Lay Branches).

The list of possible candidates, Priests of St. Francis de Sales, is drawn up with the help of:

The outgoing General Spiritual Advisor;

Members of the General Councils of both lay & religious branches;

Regional Directresses and Provincials (of SMMI).

16. As a first step, the proposed candidates are approached by those who propose them. Following this consultation, the names of the priests, and brief curriculum vitae, are collected in Paris, at the Center of the Association.

17. On the list established by the Association:

- a. The SMMI indicate the names that they wish to add;
- b. From this new list the General Council of the Association designates, by vote of a relative majority, the name of the General Spiritual Advisor;
- c. In case of tie, the General Directress votes to break it;
- d. The Association informs the General Council of the SMMI.

18. The General Directress of the St. Francis de Sales Association then contacts the candidate to inform him that his name has been proposed. If he agrees to serve, the General Directress writes to the Bishop of the diocese to which the priest belongs to request confirmation of this choice.

19. After having obtained agreement of all, the General Directress presents the name of the candidate to the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL) for nomination. Upon

receiving the letter of nomination of the General Spiritual Advisor from the PCL, the General Directress informs the two General Councils who then are in possession of:

- a. Agreement of the candidate who has been chosen;
- b. Acceptance of the Bishop
- c. Letter of appointment from the PCL

CHAPTER IX

REGIONAL DIRECTRESSES (See Art. 49-53, 2nd part Statutes)

20. Regional Directresses are not members of the General Council, but may be elected to it; one office does not exclude the other. When they assume the two responsibilities, they may name a Group Directress of their Region, who is not a delegate, to replace them in their charge of Regional Directress during the General Assembly, with the right to vote.

21. They are ex-officio members of the General Assembly (See Art. 69, Statutes). If, for a serious reason, one of them is prevented from attending a General Assembly, she may name one of the Group Directresses of the Region, who has not been elected a delegate, to replace her, with the right to vote.

22. The term of the Regional Directresses is three years, renewable two times. For particular reasons, the General Council may prolong the mandate of a Regional Directress more than two times.

23. As far as possible, the Regional Directresses meet together at least once a year with other Regionals and Councilors of the same linguistic group to consider questions concerning their responsibilities.

24. Before the end of her term, if the Regional is not willing or able to serve another term, she will search, in all the Groups of the Region, for one or several persons who might succeed her. Then she will organize a consultation of all the Associates of her Region to choose a candidate whom she will propose to the General Council for appointment.

CHAPTER X

GROUP DIRECTRESSES (Art 54-55, 2nd part of Statutes)

25. Each Group Directress is aided by a team whose members are appointed by the General Council at the same time she is. The Regional Directress proposes the Directress and team after consultation of the members of the Group.

This consultation may be done in different ways according to the Group: secret vote or by raising hands from a list of candidates, discussion among the members, etc.

26. The Group Directress assigns certain responsibilities to the team such as secretary, treasurer, etc. They help her animate the Group.

27. The Group Directresses' terms are for three years, renewable two times. For particular reasons, the General Council may prolong the mandate of a Group Directress more than two times

CHAPTER XI

GROUP CHAPLAINS (Art. 56-58, 2nd part of Statutes)

28. Each Group should have a Chaplain even if he is unable to attend all meetings.

29. Before the end of the term of a Chaplain, if he does not want to continue, resigns, or is unable to serve for any reason, the Group Directress looks for a replacement, preferably a priest of St. Francis de Sales if possible. She gives the name to the Regional Directress who suggests the name to the Bishop of the Group and informs the General Council.

If a serious problem surfaces with a Chaplain during his service, the Group Directress, after consulting her team, should ask the advice of the Regional Directress and, if needed, of the General Directress or another Council member, to determine together what attitude to take.

CHAPTER XII

PROBATRICES (See Art. 59-61, 2nd part of Statutes)

30. The Group Directress, with discernment and the agreement of the prospective Probatrice (Companion) and the Regional Directress, should choose future Probatrices. They should be Associates who have made their Consecration at least a year previously, possess a true Salesian spirit and the necessary aptitudes for this mission.

31. Admission to Future Probatrice Formation is the responsibility of the Regional Directress or the Coordinator of Auxiliaries, depending on the Region, after consulting the Probatrice and the Group Directress of the interested person.

32. Future Probatrice Formation is of two years duration, according to a course of work divided into several stages. During formation, the Future Probatrice is guided and aided by an Auxiliary who sends the documents for each stage of formation to the Future Probatrice.

Communication with the Auxiliary, which is necessary for the formation, is to be done in writing, but does not exclude personal encounters where possible.

When possible during formation, Future Probatrices may attend meetings intended for Probatrices.

At the end of the last stage of formation, a designated priest evaluates the preparation of the Future Probatrice by reviewing some of her written work.

At the End of the formation, the Regional Directress, or the coordinator of Auxiliaries, after examining the opinions of the Future Probatrice, her Auxiliary, her Probatrice and the Directress of the Group and considering her personal opinion as well as the comments of the priest on the final work, determines admission of the person to the rank of Probatrice. She sends a letter of nomination in the name of the General Council, to the new Probatrice and notifies the General Probatrice who sends a letter of mission to the new Probatrice.

33. At the request of an Associate, the Group Directress may, with the agreement of the Regional Directress, change the assigned Probatrice. Likewise, the Group Directress and the Probatrice may suggest this change to an Associate.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENERAL TREASURER (See Art.62-62, 2nd Part of Statutes)

34. With the local treasurer and the various Directresses of the Association, the General Treasurer has an educational role. Specifically, she helps each member to discern her financial responsibility in regard to the Association as a whole. She should also help the members to understand the importance of decisions made by the General Council relating to the budget, notably to the Salesian Pence contribution due from each one.

CHAPTER XIV

SALESIAN TEAMS (Art. 65, 2nd part of Statutes)

35. Some Associates choose to live their Salesian Consecration in community with other members of the Association. They commit themselves to a time of prayer in common, everyday if possible.

36. When the number of members of the Salesian Teams justifies it, the General Council names a Leader. In this case, she is an ex-officio member of the General Assembly.

37. According to present arrangements, the members of the Teams own and manage their own possessions, but share in the general expenses of the community to the extent possible for them.

38. In their old age, or when unable to work, they may be admitted by right and by priority to the guesthouse of the Fondation de l'Entraide Salesienne. If necessary, the Foundation will take responsibility for their care in another retirement home.

ELECTION OF DELEGATES TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(See Art. 69, 2nd part Statutes)

CHAPTER XV

GENERAL CONDITIONS

39. The vote is direct.

40. Electors are Associates who enjoy the rights recognized by the Statutes of the St. Francis de Sales Association.

41. A list of electors, the total number of Associates, will be established by Region.

42. Probanists, those in formation, who have not finished the requirements to be an Associate, are not to be included on the list of electors.

43. Any Associate may be a candidate and may be elected as a delegate. The Regional Directress, with the help of her team, will propose an electoral list of candidates, after consultation with all Associates making up the region. The list will be communicated to each consecrated member.

44. Each delegate will have an alternate elected from the electoral list. Alternates will be those Associates who had the greatest number of votes after the elected delegates.

CHAPTER XVI

ELECTORAL LISTS

45. Inclusion on the electoral lists is a function of being an Associate.

46. No Associate may be included on more than one electoral list.

47. Electoral lists are regularly revised, up until six months before ballots are opened.

48. Electoral lists are collected, registered and saved in the archives of the Association. Any Associate may ask to see the electoral lists.

CHAPTER XVII

CONTROL OF THE ELECTORAL LISTS

49. The General Council is commissioned to hold a general file of Associates for the purpose of controlling inclusion on the electoral lists.

50. The General Council makes necessary modifications to the electoral lists.

CHAPTER XVIII

ELECTION PROCESS

51. Election of delegates is held in each region, at the place determined by the Regional Directress, at least six (6) months before the General Assembly. The vote may be in person, by proxy or by correspondence.

52. Election shall last only one day and on one, single ballot. The Regional Directress serves ex-officio as President of the election judges. Two other judges, chosen from the Associates, complete the committee of judges.

53. In the room for election, the ballots and plain envelopes are placed on a table prepared for that purpose by the Regional Directress.

54. The election is by secret ballot.

55. Ballots are placed in a plain envelope. The day of the vote, ballots and envelopes are provided to the Associates in the meeting room.

56. After each Associate puts her vote in the ballot box, her vote is certified by signing her name, in ink, across from her name on the list of registration.

57. To be elected, a delegate should have obtained at least a relative majority of the votes cast. In case of a tie between two or several Associates, she who has made her consecration at the earliest date shall be declared elected.

58. Associates prevented from coming to the voting place may vote by proxy or by correspondence.

59. At the close of the voting, the total number of envelopes containing ballots is counted to ascertain that it equals the number of electors. Then ballots are counted in the following manner: The ballot box is opened and the total number of envelopes is verified, then they are opened. The President of the election and the two judges count the votes and record the results on a page prepared for this purpose, which the three of them sign. The President of the election then reads the results.

CHAPTER XIX

VOTING BY PROXY

60. Upon request, Associates may exercise their vote by proxy.
61. The proxy should belong to the same Region as the Associate requesting it.
62. An Associate may not exercise more than two proxies.
63. The Associate exercising the proxy vote participates under the same conditions as ordinary Associates. Proxy votes are registered by approval of the proxy and by her signature in ink on the margin of the list of electors across from the name of the voter she represents.

CHAPTER XX

VOTING BY CORRESPONDENCE

64. Associates may exercise their right to vote by correspondence if they request it.
65. The Associate sends her ballot by mail directly the Regional Directress of the place where the election will be held. Her ballot should be in an envelope on which she has written her name and that enclosed in a second, plain envelope that will be placed in the ballot box the day of the vote. The second envelope should carry no marks under pain of nullity.
66. On the day of the vote, the envelopes with names are opened, after marking the names of the electors voting by correspondence on the register. Notation is made on the list of electors that vote was by correspondence, and then the envelope in which the ballot is hidden is put in the ballot box.

CHAPTER XXI

NUMBER OF DELEGATES

67. The ratio of representation is based upon fractions of 100 Associates (in a each Region) according to the following formula:

1-29 Associates	0 delegate
30-129 Associates	1 delegate
130-229 Associates	2 delegates
230-329 Associates	3 delegates
330-429 Associates	4 delegates

68. The revision of the number of delegates by Region will be the function of the change in number of Associates. Responsibility for this revision belongs to the General Council during the meeting held in preparation for the convocation of the General Assembly.

ELECTION OF GENERAL COUNCILORS

(See Art. 70, 2nd part of Statutes)

CHAPTER XXII

GENERAL CONDITIONS

69. General Councilors (elected from the territories) shall number no more than 14 and no fewer than 6.

70. Representation is based on 300 Associates according to the following formula:

1- 300 Associates	1 General Councilor
301- 600 Associates	2 General Councilors
601- 900 Associates	3 General Councilors
901-1200 Associates	4 General Councilors
1201-1500 Associates	5 General Councilors

71. General Councilors are elected from Territorial Assemblies consisting of ex-officio members (Outgoing General Councilors & Regional Directresses) and all delegates of Regions belonging to the same territory.

72. Election of General Councilors takes place 3 months before the date of the General Assembly.

CHAPTER XXIII

LENGTH OF TERMS AND RENEWAL

73. General Councilors are elected for a three-year term, renewable one time between two General Assemblies. By right they are eligible for re-election.

74. The term of General Councilors begins the day of the General Assembly that the election of the General Directress takes place.

75. Renewal will be confirmed in writing by a letter from the General Councilor, which is addressed to the General Directress.

CHAPTER XXIV

TERRITORIAL ASSEMBLIES

76. Territorial Assemblies consist of ex-officio members (General Councilors and Regional Directresses) and the delegates of each of the five territories making up the

Association: (1) France, (2) Europe minus France, (3) United States, (4) South America and (5) other countries of the world. (Appellations changed in 2009.)

77. Revision of the number of General Councilors in each territory will be made according to verification of the census of the Associates. It is the responsibility of the General Council at the meeting in preparation for the convocation of a General Assembly.

CHAPTER XXV

PROCESS FOR ELECTING GENERAL COUNCILORS

78. Election of General Councilors is held in each territory.

79. Election shall take place in one day and on one ballot.

80. A list of candidates will be proposed after consulting the outgoing General Councilors, delegates and Regional Directresses representing the territory.

81. To be elected, a General Councilor should obtain at least a relative majority of the total number of votes cast. In case of a tie between two or more Associates, she who made her Consecration at the earliest date shall be declared elected.

82. Conditions for counting the votes should conform to the same rules as for the election of delegates (Art. 54-56 and 58-66). However, in countries where the postal service is uncertain or very slow, which makes voting by correspondence difficult or impossible, the ballot may be sent by fax. (Second sentence added by GA, 2009)

CHAPTER XXVI

ALTERNATE GENERAL COUNCILORS (See Art. 26, 2nd Part Statutes)

83. In each Territory, there will be as far as possible, as many alternates as there are General Councilors to be elected. Alternates will be those who have obtained the largest number of votes after the General Councilors elected.

84. Alternate General Councilors from a Territory are called to replace General Councilors of that Territory whose seat might become vacant for any reason between two General Assemblies. If in this Territory, there is not Alternate General Councilor available for service, the General Council may name a replacement, after consulting the Regional Directresses of the corresponding territory.

ELECTION OF THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS

(See Art. 77-78 of 2nd part of Statutes)

CHAPTER XXVII

COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

85. The General Directress is elected during the General Assembly by the assembly of the ex-officio members and elected members as defined in Article 69 of the Second Part of the Statutes.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PREPARATION TO ELECT THE GENERAL DIRECTRESS

86. The ex-officio and elected members are convoked in writing to the General Assembly called to elect the General Directress.

87. The convocation should make mention of the hours of opening and closing of the election.

CHAPTER XXIX

VOTING PROCESS

88. Ballots will be sealed in an envelope. The day of the vote, ballots and envelopes are available to the electors in the assembly hall.

Before opening the ballots, a committee of the acting General Directress and her two Assistants (failing that, three members of the General Council, one of whom will officiate as President of the voting place) must verify that the number of envelopes corresponds exactly to the number of members that make up the electoral college.

89. On entering the hall of vote, each elector, after stating her identity according to the established rules and customs, or after proving her right to vote, the elector takes an envelope. Remaining in the voting hall, she should go alone to the part of the room provided, away from the regard of others, to put her ballot in the envelope. The President of the vote notes it, without touching the envelope, which the elector alone puts in the ballot box. That each elector has voted is attested to by her signature in ink, opposite her name on the list of electors.

90. The list (ballot) proposed for vote should carry the name of the candidate or candidates. Electors may mark out the name of candidates who choose to withdraw.

91. Opening of the ballots takes place according to the rules stated in Art. 59.

92. Ballots are null and void if:

- a. All names have been crossed out on it.
- b. More than one name remains on the ballot.

ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CHAPTER XXX

PROGRAM AND DELIBERATIONS (Art. 76, Statutes)

93. At its opening session, the General Assembly approves the agenda that has been previously prepared by the General Council, and includes the wishes expressed by the different Regions.

It defines the orientations that the Association will follow until the next General Assembly.

94. No decision of the General Assembly is valid unless it receives:

- a. An absolute majority of votes cast
- b. A number of votes equal to at least one half of the number of ex-officio members and elected members making up the electoral college.

95. All members of the General Assembly have an equal vote both for election of the General Directress and for all deliberations.

96. At the end of the work of the General Assembly, the General Directress summarizes the Assembly's orientations for the upcoming six years.

97. The General Directress informs the Pontifical Council for the Laity of the results of the elections of members of the General Council.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CHAPTER XXXI

CONDITIONS AND PROCESSES (See Art. 81, 2nd Part of the Statutes)

98. For an especially grave reason, at the request of the General Council, after a two-thirds vote, the General Directress, or the Assistant who has replaced her, may call an Extraordinary General Assembly, according to the methods set out in Article 69 and following of the 2nd Part of the Statutes.

ADMINISTRATION OF FUNDS

CHAPTER XXXII

FINANCIAL COUNCIL

99. If needed, a financial council may be instituted. It would be composed of the General Directress and one or more members of the General Council designated for this purpose as well as the General Treasurer. Other persons, chosen for their expertise by the General Council, may be consulted.

Note: This Interior Rule was voted on and approved at the General Assembly of May 30 to June 2, 2003. It went into effect in April, 2007, after approval by the Vatican Pontifical Council for the Laity, of the Statutes approved by the same General Assembly in 2003. Slight changes made during the G.A. of 2009 are noted.