

□ Reading time: 5 min.

Borja Pérez Galnares is the new World Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators. The appointment was announced on 9 May 2026 by the Rector Major, Fr Fabio Attard, during the VI World Congress of the Association, held in Sacrofano, Rome, in the context of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Cooperators.

Originally from Santander, Spain, Borja Pérez is married to Emma, who is also a Salesian Cooperator. His journey in the Salesian Family began in his childhood, when he attended the Salesian College in his city. Since then, he has maintained a constant connection with the Salesian mission, especially in the field of youth ministry.

As a young man, he was an animator in the Salesian work in Santander and, subsequently, took on coordinating roles in the Salesian Youth Movement at the provincial, national, and European levels. Together with his wife, he currently accompanies a youth community in the parish of Nueva Montaña, also in Santander.

A Salesian Cooperator since 2007, the year he made his promise in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, during the national Campobosco, Borja Pérez held the role of World Councillor for the Iberian Region, comprising Spain and Portugal, prior to his new appointment. In this capacity, he also accompanied the preparatory journey for the 150th anniversary of the Association.

By profession, he is a civil engineer specialising in infrastructure and has worked for about twenty years in a Spanish multinational company in the construction sector. His experience therefore combines family life, professional competence, ecclesial commitment, and associational service.

His election also marks a significant transition in the recent history of the Association: for the first time, the World Coordinator does not come from the Italy-Middle East-Malta Region. The new mandate, for the period 2026-2032, opens under the sign of four words indicated by the Rector Major: listening, communion, mission, and participation. In this perspective, Borja Pérez is called to guide the Salesian Cooperators in service to the Church, the Salesian Family, and young people, with particular attention to families and the poorest people.

Dear Borja, you have recently been appointed World Coordinator of the Association of Salesian Cooperators: I would like to ask you a few questions so that I can introduce you to the whole Association.

Thank you, Carlo, for this interview; I am very happy to answer your questions.

First of all, can you tell us a little about yourself?

I was born in Santander, in northern Spain, 46 years ago. The Salesian presence is very strong in that city. It is one of the oldest Salesian communities in Spain, dating back to 1892, and many generations have passed through the Salesian school where I studied. I am married to Emma, who is also from Santander and a Salesian Cooperator. I am a civil engineer and work in Madrid for a multinational company specialising in infrastructure development, headquartered in Spain but with a global presence, which has allowed me to travel extensively and work in very different contexts.

Right. You mentioned your family, but now I'd also like to talk about another Family, the Salesian Family. How did you come to know it? And what was your journey towards making the Promise as a Salesian Cooperator?

As I mentioned earlier, I am a former pupil of the Salesian school in Santander and have always been involved in the Salesian youth movement, first as a participant and then as a leader. Subsequently, I became involved in the leadership of the Salesian Youth Movement at provincial, national and even European secretariat level. Therefore, it can be said that my vocation as a Salesian Cooperator arose from my pastoral work and the experiences shared with Salesians, animators and young people. That is why I appreciate so much the opportunity to offer young people concrete experiences and shared spaces. In 2004, I began my formation as an aspirant and made my promise on 3 August 2007. I had the great privilege of doing so in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco, before our Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, during Campobosco, a gathering of members of the

Salesian Youth Movement from Spain and Portugal.

Since becoming a Salesian Cooperator, you have also held a number of positions of responsibility: could you briefly summarise them?

Shortly after making my promise, I joined the Iberian Regional Secretariat, where I led youth and vocations ministry for six years. During this period, we began to collaborate closely with the National Centre for Youth Ministry, ensuring the presence of the SSCCs from Spain and Portugal in numerous pastoral initiatives. Before being elected World Councillor for the Iberian Region in June 2022, I also led various formation initiatives, although I had never been part of a local or provincial council.

And now we have come to the most demanding role: that of World Coordinator. What were the main reasons that led you to offer yourself for this role?

My main motivation is to put my talents at the service of the Association and to be available for whatever is needed. This is the motivation that led me in 2022 to offer my service as a World Councillor, and the same reasoning has led me in recent months to consider the possibility of offering myself again for this service, without any expectations as to what might happen.

Thank you very much, and now I'd like to get a little personal: how did you feel when the Rector Major called out your name that evening of 9 May?

I remained calm under the circumstances and, as I said in my speech after the appointment, very grateful for the trust placed in me, but at the same time with a great sense of my own smallness. Over all these years, I have met extraordinary Salesian Cooperators, true saints next door. And one really feels small when one finds oneself leading an Association made up of such deserving people.

9 May: what a wonderful coincidence. We celebrated the 150th anniversary of the approval of our Association; now you have the task of leading it in the coming years. What are your dreams?

Antonio Boccia, who has led the Association in such an extraordinary way over the years, and Fr Fabio Attard, in their speeches during the congress, offered many insights that align with my dreams: a human and fraternal Association that knows how to bear meaningful witness to the Gospel in the world, that is capable of welcoming those around us unconditionally, that knows how to give responsibility and a leading role to young people, starting with those who are already part of the Association. A formation more centred on experience and not merely on theoretical content. An Association made up of brothers and sisters with a clear Salesian identity. And an Association made up of brothers and sisters who do not forget that it is Christ who moves us and that everything we do or bear witness to will have meaning to the extent that this, and not other things, motivates us in our proposals and activities.

I'll conclude with one final question. What do you think will be the most urgent steps to take together with the World Council?

I believe we should focus more on what is important rather than on what is urgent, without, however, neglecting the latter. The World Council, as a governing and animating body, must continue to operate in a synodal spirit, involving the entire Association in its proposals. We must have a broad perspective and the ability to plan ahead, always looking beyond the most immediate needs.

Thank you very much, Carlo, for the opportunity to address all the Salesian Cooperators around the world, so that they may get to know me a little better.

Carlo PELLEGRINO

World Secretary of the Association of Salesian Cooperators

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