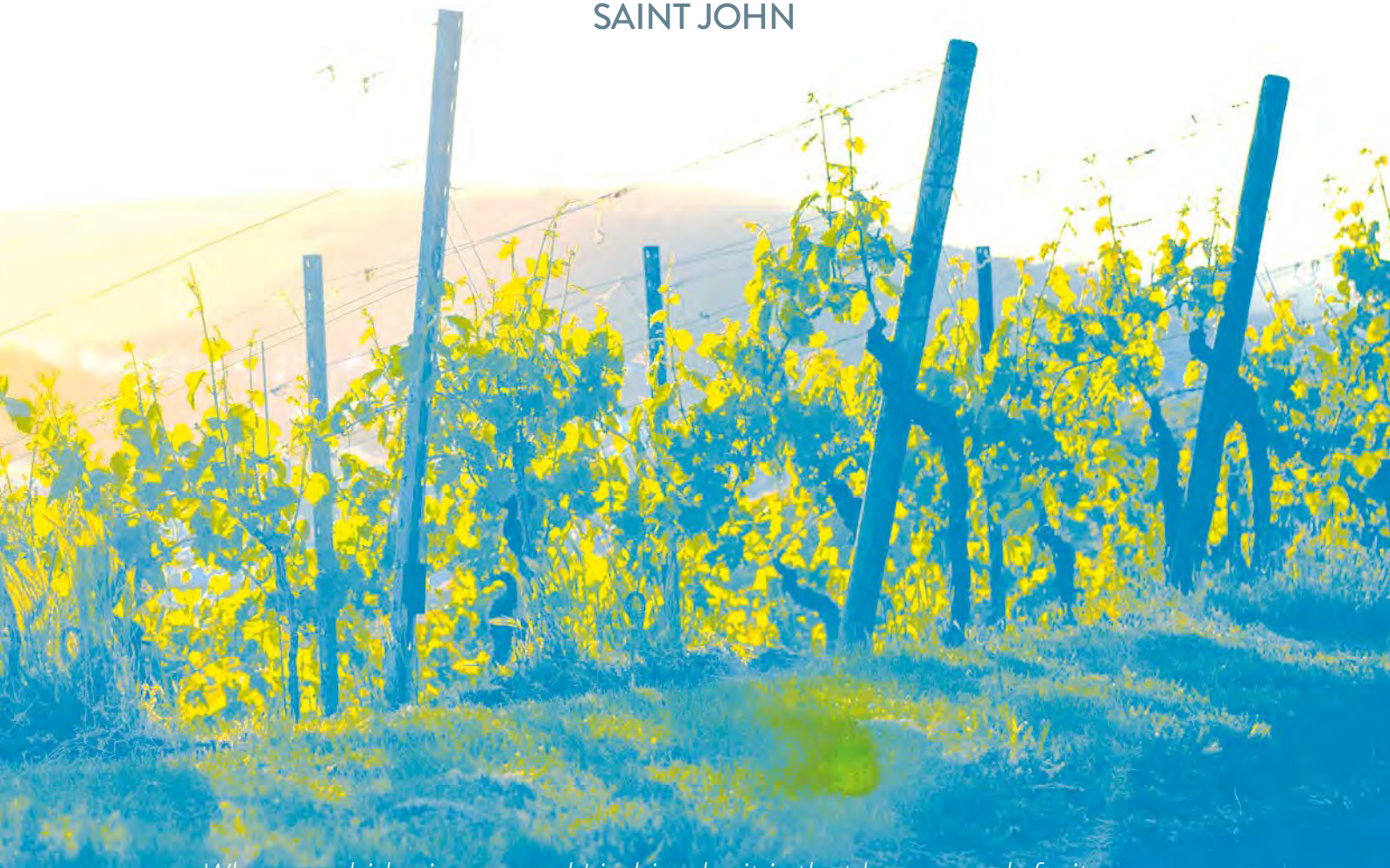
RATIO FORMATIONIS
Congreationis Sancti Johannis

23 December 2022

BROTHERS OF
SAINT JOHN



Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit **John 15:5**

Release : RF-01-03a

Brother François-Xavier Cazali

Prior General

BROTHERS OF SAINT JOHN

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

I hereby approve and promulgate the Ratio Formationis Congregationis Sancti Johannis.

This promulgation marks both the completion of a particular task and also a stage in a longer process. It is the completion of work commissioned by the General Chapter of 2016 in response to a request from the Church, who deemed our previous texts unsatisfactory.

The work coincides with a stage of profound reform in our congregation. The goal was set, and has been achieved, of involving a broad contribution from across the congregation in all its different instantiations: formator brothers, superiors, the local and vicarial chapters, and the general chapters of 2019 and 2022, the latter having encouraged the promulgation of this text. Contributions also came from the Sisters of Saint John, the Oblates of Saint John, and many qualified experts external to the community. Constructive comments from all quarters and fruitful dialogue allowed for a continuous evolution to take place during the years in which the text was written.

Thanks to the skills and expertise of those who contributed, the final document constitutes a real step forward in many areas: notably, envisaging formation in terms of permanent, ongoing formation; envisaging the stages of religious life and the issues involved in each stage from the perspective of formation; widening the field of formation to include six clearly defined dimensions; providing further clarity on the stages of initial formation; and integrating contributions from the human sciences. In each of these areas, the Ratio Formationis completes a process of updating which effectively integrates the instructions and directives of the church over recent years, whilst at the same time translating the specific charism of the congregation into the language of formation.

This promulgation is also a stage in a longer process, in the sense that the Ratio Formationis must at a later date be revised in accordance with the proper law of the Congregation, which is currently still in the process of being determined.

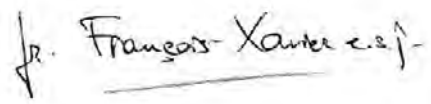
It should be noted that the Ratio Formationis had to respond to two challenges. The first was to participate in the work undertaken by the Congregation to express its charism in a new and fresh way, and to do this before such key texts as the Constitutions and Directory had been updated. With this in mind, after conferring with the Master of Studies, I asked the editorial team who had raised questions on this subject to avoid quotations from our historical founding texts, the status of which was in question. Meanwhile, the General Chapter of 2022 decided during its first session to withdraw the Rule of Life from the Constitutions, and to withdraw its status as a fundamental text of reference. Discussion of the status of the two Charters during the General Chapter was postponed due to a

lack of time. Without prejudging the value of some of the intuitions and teaching they may contain (a number of their themes, which form part of the community patrimony, surface here and there in the Ratio Formationis), quoting these three texts would therefore have been problematic or ambiguous in this context, and this will remain the case until a sufficiently detached and peaceful process of discernment can be undertaken in their regard. The General Chapter of 2022 did not consider it appropriate to undertake that work, wanting to give priority to work on the Constitutions. The text of the Ratio Formationis is therefore based explicitly on the work and declarations on the charism from the General Chapters of 2019 and 2022. From this point of view, then, the text of the Ratio Formationis corresponds to the current stage of the Congregation's journey.

The second challenge was to be brief so that a synthetic vision of the principles governing formation in the Congregation of Saint John might be provided, while at the same time responding to the comments of formators and a number of other brothers who complained that the texts at their disposal were too theoretical to act as guides and therefore requested that something more practical be provided. It was also necessary to approach new themes in a sufficiently pedagogical way. This tension was not able to be resolved, and the text is too long to be read from start to finish without some effort. Nevertheless, the tables in the appendices allow for easier consultation. This is also a stage in a longer process, and the moment may come in the future for a compendium or a more concise version to be written following the reform of the Constitutions.

Having noted all the above points, I would like to offer my thanks to everyone on the team who wrote the document—selflessly devoting themselves to the task, listening to all those who offered input and placing themselves at the service of all—as well as to all those who contributed in any way. I offer you my heartfelt thanks for having given us the means by which we might renew ourselves through a deeper understanding of our formation as Brothers of Saint John. Reading and implementing this document will be beneficial to all: brothers in continuous, ongoing formation, formators, and brothers in initial formation.

Given in Rimont, on 23 December 2022



Brother François-Xavier Cazali, C.S.J.

Prior General

CONTENTS OVERVIEW

PART ONE: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION

SECTION ONE: BECOMING A BROTHER OF SAINT JOHN TODAY

Chapter 1: Entering into our charism
Chapter 2: The current context and direction of formation

SECTION TWO: GENERAL REMARKS ON FORMATION

Chapter 3: What is formation?
Chapter 4: Key people in formation

SECTION THREE: SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF INITIAL FORMATION

Chapter 5: Specific guidelines for initial formation
Chapter 6: The essential role of formators

PART TWO: DYNAMICS OF FORMATION

SECTION ONE: FUNDAMENTAL DYNAMICS OF FORMATION

Chapter 7: Spiritual formation
Chapter 8: Human formation
Chapter 9: Intellectual formation

SECTION TWO: DYNAMICS OF FORMATION IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE

Chapter 10: Formation in the vows (consecration)
Chapter 11: Community formation (communion)
Chapter 12: Apostolic formation (mission)

PART THREE: STAGES AND PROGRESSION OF FORMATION

SECTION ONE: KEY MOMENTS IN ONGOING FORMATION

Chapter 13: Some key moments in ongoing formation

SECTION TWO: STAGES OF INITIAL FORMATION

Chapter 14: Pre-novitiate
Chapter 15: Novitiate
Chapter 16: Temporary profession
Chapter 17: First years of perpetual profession

APPENDICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECREE OF PROMULGATION 3

CONTENTS OVERVIEW 5

ABBREVIATIONS 20

GENERAL INTRODUCTION 21

1. What is a ratio formationis? 21
2. Why promulgate a ratio formationis at this time? 21
3. How was the ratio formationis drawn-up? 21
4. What is the prescriptive value of the text? 22
5. A text which primarily concerns ongoing formation 22
6 Ratio Congregationis and Ratio Provincialis 23
7. Plan of the document 23
8. How to use this text to good effect 24

PART ONE 25

General Guidelines for Formation 25

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE 26

1. The aim of Part One 26
2. Plan of Part One 26

SECTION ONE: Becoming a Brother of Saint John Today 27

Chapter One: ENTERING INTO OUR CHARISM 28

I. DISCOVERING, EXPERIENCING, AND DEEPENING THE SPIRIT OF OUR INSTUTUTE 28

1. Following Jesus after the example of John and consecrating ourselves to him 28
2. Becoming beloved disciples of Jesus and abiding in him through a life of contemplative prayer 29
3. Participating in the priestly work of Christ and nurturing a missionary spirit 29
4. Obeying the commandment to love and leading a fraternal life in common 30
5. Seeking truth for the sake of charity and engaging in study 30
6. Being nourished by the Bread of Life at Mass and in Eucharistic adoration 31
7. Taking Mary into our home 31
8. Loving and serving the Church as we await the coming of Christ 32

9. Bearing witness to what we have contemplated . . . 32
II. WORKING FOR THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD . . . 33
1. Contributing to the mission of the Church by offering human and Christian formation . . . 33
2. Making our communities into places of prayer, charity, and light . . . 33
III. BEING FORMED IN OUR WAY OF LIFE . . . 33
1. Living by our Constitutions . . . 33
2. Formation for an evangelical life of contemplation and apostolate . . . 34
3. Making time for study and formation . . . 34
4. Leading a fraternal life in common guided by the discernment of the conventual chapter . . . 34
5. Incorporating elements of monastic origin . . . 34
IV. LETTING OUR CHARISM SHINE FORTH . . . 35
1. Knowing the history of our Congregation . . . 35
2. Developing the life of our charism . . . 35
3. Participating in ongoing formation and enabling our charism to unfold . . . 35
4. Care for vocations in the Congregation . . . 36

Chapter 2: THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND DIRECTION OF FORMATION . . . 37
I. THE CURRENT TURNING POINT IN OUR CONGREGATION . . . 37
1. Reform of the Congregation and distancing from the founder . . . 37
2. Decentralisation . . . 38
3. Internationalisation of the Congregation . . . 38
II. ECCLESIAL CHALLENGES FOR CONSECRATED LIFE . . . 38
1. The challenges of commitment and perseverance . . . 38
2. Challenges faced in religious life today . . . 39
a) A challenge for consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels . . . 39
b) A challenge for life in common . . . 39
c) A challenge for mission . . . 39
3. The abuse crisis . . . 39
4. Readjusting our vision of the priesthood . . . 40
5. The question of the place of women in the Church . . . 40
III. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR FORMATION AND MISSION . . . 40
1. A changed perspective on God and the religious dimension of man . . . 41
2. A new vision of man . . . 42
3. Interpersonal and social relationships in a period of change . . . 42
4. A new context for dialogue with others . . . 43
5. A changed relationship with the world and with society . . . 43
IV. POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN OUR FORMATION . . . 44
1. Proposing formation that is integral . . . 44
2. Emphasising freedom of conscience . . . 44
3. Instituting clear and practical formation on chastity . . . 45
4. Formation in accompaniment . . . 45
5. Supporting fraternal relationships and accompanying our communities . . . 45
6. Formation in collegial governance and a sense of the common good . . . 46
7. Encouraging self-knowledge and the development of skills and proficiency . . . 46
8. Taking cultures into account . . . 46
9. Taking into account the specific needs of lay brothers and deacons . . . 46
10. Entering into and evangelising the digital world . . . 47
11. Working to find our place in, and to cooperate with, the Church . . . 47
12. Accompanying crises and encouraging perseverance . . . 47

SECTION TWO: General Remarks on Formation 49

Chapter 3: WHAT IS FORMATION? 50

I. THE JOURNEY OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST 50

1. The ongoing path of being configured to Christ 50
2. A journey that aligns with and unites all the aspects of our vocation 51
3. A missionary apprenticeship 51
4. An ecclesial experience 52
5. A programme of creative fidelity 52

II. A PATH OF TRANSFORMATION 52

1. Passing from an ideal to reality 53
2. A path of integration and unification 53
3. A journey of self-giving 54
4. A journey to be made with companions 54

III. A PROGRAMME OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PEDAGOGY 54

5. A concrete path of formation 54
6. A personalised and “personalising” formation 55

IV. A path of growth for the community 55

Chapter 4:KEY PEOPLE IN FORMATION 56

I. THE TRINITY: PRIMARY AGENT OF FORMATION 56

I. THE BROTHER AS THE PRIMARY PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS FORMATION 56

1. Openness to formation 56
2. Entering into dialogue with those who partner us in our formation 57
3. Defining concrete frameworks and objectives of formation 58
4. Persevering in one's vocation 58

III. FRATERNAL ACCOMPANIMENT 58

IV. THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT OF FORMATION: THE PRIORY 59

1. The priory as a "formative community" 59
2. Community growth 59
3. Community engagement in formation 60

V. THE ROLE OF AUTHORITIES 60

1. The role of the prior 60
2. The role of the Prior Provincial 61
3. The roles of the Director Provincial of Formation and the Director General of Formation 61
4. The Prior General 62

VI. SPIRITUAL AND SACRAMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT 62

1. Spiritual accompaniment 62
2. The confessor 63

VII. THE CHURCH 63

1. The Church's Accompaniment 63
2. Ecclesial communion and the sharing of gifts 63

VIII. THE VIRGIN MARY AND THE SAINTS 63

SECTION THREE: Specific Aspects of Initial Formation 65

Chapter 5: SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL FORMATION 66

I. OBJECTIVES FOR A BROTHERS' GROWTH IN INITIAL FORMATION 66

1. Discovering the vocation of a Brother of Saint John 66
2. Establishing the fundamentals of consecrated life 66
3. Setting out on the path of ongoing formation 67
4. Taking the path of discernment 67

II. DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE PEDAGOGY 67

1. Providing education for responsible adults 67
2. Drawing on the wisdom of the Church and the tools of the contemporary world 68
3. Teaching in an approach that seeks truth and good wise sense 68
4. Accompanying each person in community life 68

III. OFFERING PROGRESSIVE AND PERSONALISED FORMATION 69

IV. ASSESSING SUITABILITY: THE ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES 69

Chapter 6: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF FORMATORS 70

I. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A FORMATOR 70

1. The mission of the formator 70
2. The appointment of formators 70
3. The preparation of formators 71
4. The continued formation of formators 71
5. Code of conduct and supervision 72

II. WHO ARE THE FORMATORS? 72

1. The prior of the formation house 72
2. Novice Masters and Masters of the Temporary Professed, their assistants and the socius 73
3. The local Director of Studies 73
4. Spiritual accompaniers 74
5. Other formators 74

III. FORMATION TEAMS AND THEIR INTERNAL COOPERATION 75

1. Composition of a formation team 75
2. Cooperation within the formation team 75
3. The different areas of accompaniment 75
   a) Spiritual leadership of the formation community 76
   b) Accompanying apostolic formation 76
   c) The area of human formation 76
4. Formator meetings 76
5. Establishing rules for the houses of formation 77

IV. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE COMMUNITY OR FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT FORMATORS 77

1. Teachers and tutors for studies 77
2. The different people who contribute from outside the formation house 77
3. The importance of laypeople, especially women 77

PART TWO: The Dynamics of Formation 79

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO 80
1. Aim and prescriptive value of Part Two 80
2. A guide to reading Part Two 80

SECTION ONE: The Fundamental Dynamics of Formation 81

Chapter 7: SPIRITUAL FORMATION 82
I. LEADING A LIFE WITH CHRIST IN THE SPIRIT 82
1. Seeking Christ 82
   a) Drawing near to Christ through faith 82
   b) Becoming humble by recognising oneself to be a sinful and saved creature 82
   c) Setting out on the path of interiority 83
   d) Learning to live in contemplative prayer 83
   e) Participating in the prayer and priesthood of Christ 84
2. Learning to lead a life in the Spirit 85
   a) Learning to let ourselves be led by the Spirit 85
   b) Cooperating with the work of grace 85
   c) Letting ourselves be habitually led by the Spirit (gifts and charisms) 85
   d) Participating in the life and mission of the Church 86

II. LEARNING TO NOURISH OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE 86
1. Nourishing our relationship with Christ 87
   a) The word of God 87
   b) The Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist 87
   c) Constant prayer 88
2. Discerning and carrying out God's will 89
3. Being formed by spiritual reading and spiritual theology 89
4. Uniting ourselves to Christ through the evangelical counsels 90
5. Recognising Christ in our brothers 90
6. Uniting ourselves to Christ in mission 91

III. PUTTING THE EXERCISES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE INTO PRACTICE 91
1. Practicing penance 91
2. Practicing asceticism 92
3. Practicing spiritual combat and the discernment of spirits 93
4. Practicing mercy 93
5. Finding support in spiritual accompaniment 94

IV. BEARING FRUIT THAT WILL LAST 94
1. Unifying our lives around the Paschal Mystery of Christ 94
2. Reaching spiritual maturity and bearing fruit for the Church 95
3. Consecrating ourselves to God through Mary 95
4. Striving for holiness and awaiting the return of Christ 96

Chapter 8: HUMAN FORMATION 97
I. GROWTH AS AN AUTONOMOUS AND ADULT PERSON 97
1. Learning to know oneself 97
2. Building healthy self-confidence and developing appropriate self-esteem 98

3. Loving the truth . . . 98
4. Growing in personal autonomy . . . 99
II. WORK . . . 99
1. Taking on the discipline of work as a consecrated person . . . 99
2. Developing a capacity for work . . . 100
3. Developing skills and proficiency at work . . . 100
4. Learning to work with others . . . 100
5. Working in a balanced way . . . 101
III. DEVELOPPING EMOTIONAL, SEXUAL, AND RELATIONAL MATURITY . . . 101
1. Educating our emotional life . . . 101
2. Giving sexuality its rightful place . . . 102
a) Cultivating the integrity of our person . . . 102
b) Managing our sexuality and integrating it into our person . . . 103
c) Opening up to fruitfulness . . . 104
3. Developing relational maturity . . . 104
a) Accepting our identity and integrating sexual alterity . . . 104
b) Developing chaste relationships . . . 105
c) Serving others and giving of ourselves . . . 106
IV. MATURING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO A GROUP . . . 106
1. Acquiring relational and social virtues . . . 106
2. Learning to live in a group . . . 107
3. Developing right relationships with our families . . . 107
4. Knowing one's own culture and learning to live interculturally . . . 107
V. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE . . . 108
1. Keeping in good shape . . . 108
2. Cultivating psychological balance . . . 109
3. Integrating intellectual and cultural life . . . 110
4. Cultivating the joy of life . . . 110
VI. FORMING OUR FREEDOM AND FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE . . . 111
1. Working towards becoming free . . . 111
2. Taking responsibility for our actions . . . 112
3. Forming our conscience . . . 112
VII. ACQUIRING WISE GOOD SENSE . . . 113
1. Learning from experience . . . 113
2. Coming to a mature vision of man and life . . . 113
3. Integrating fragility and weakness . . . 113
4. Acquiring a spirit of serenity . . . 114

Chapter 9: INTELLECTUAL FORMATION . . . 115
I. CONSECRATING OUR INTELLIGENCE TO GOD . . . 115
1. Centring our intelligence on God . . . 115
2. Converting our minds to Christ, the Wisdom of God . . . 115
3. Desiring the gift of wisdom from the Holy Spirit . . . 116
4. Seeking the truth in all things . . . 116
II. COMITTMENT TO STUDY . . . 117
1. Marvelling at reality and opening ourselves to its questions . . . 117
2. Initiating inquiry and acquiring the habits of work . . . 117
3. Learning to listen to and think with others . . . 118
4. Getting involved in study projects . . . 119

III. ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON 120
1. Working to acquire the science of theology and philosophy 120
a) Discovering theology as listening to and proclaiming the word of God 120
b) Discovering philosophy as a search for the "what" and the "why" of things 120
c) Learning from the masters 121
2. Bringing faith and reason into dialogue 121
3. Serving the Church through an apostolate of human and Christian formation 122
IV. SEEKING TRUTH FOR THE SAKE OF CHARITY 122
1. Integrating the intellectual dimension into the development of our person 122
2. Working towards a coherent life 123
3. Studying to better keep the word of God 123
4. Building community life around fraternal dialogue and the common search for truth 124
5. Serving the evangelisation of the world and culture 124

SECTION TWO: Dynamics of Formation in the Consecrated Life .. 125

Chapter 10: FORMATION IN THE VOWS 126
I. ENTERING THE DYNAMIC OF CONSECRATION 126
1. Consecrating ourselves to God in response to his call 126
a) Responding to Christ's call to give our life to him 126
b) Self-renunciation in order to follow Christ 126
a) Giving and keeping our word 127
2. Taking on Christ's form of life 127
a) Letting ourselves be configured to Christ chaste, poor, and obedient 127
b) Listening to the Holy Spirit, who shows us the daily path of our consecration 127
c) Living our vows in community 128
3. Serving the Church through our vows 128
a) Drawing on the support of the Church, which provides the framework for our consecration 128
b) Serving the Church through our consecration by being a sign of Christ 129
II. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF CHASTITY 129
1. Embracing the vow of chastity as a constant call and a daily mission 129
2. Putting God at the centre of our affective life and being intentional in our celibacy 130
3. Drawing support from the virtue of chastity 130
4. Self-giving with a pure heart 131
5. Developing integral chastity 132
a) Chastity and our relationship with God 132
b) Chastity and community life 132
c) Chastity and the search for truth 133
d) Chastity and the apostolate 133
e) Chastity and the other vows 134
III. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF POVERTY 134
1. Finding our treasure in the poverty of Christ 134
2. Developing a sense of work and responsibility 135
3. Choosing sobriety and moderation 135
4. Developing a sense of sharing 136
5. Accepting lack and dependence 136
6. Formation in discernment 137
7. Formation in economic management 137

IV. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE 138
1. Developing interior obedience to God 139
2. Being formed to respect the different areas of authority 139
3. Forming personal autonomy 140
4. Entering into spiritual discernment with a brother in authority 141
5. Cooperating in the conventual chapter and practising collegiality 141

Chapter 11: COMMUNITY FORMATION 142
I. BECOMING "BROTHERS" 142
1. Receiving brothers from God and walking together towards holiness 142
2. Taking an interest in one's brothers and giving them space 143
3. Sharing with brothers and knowing how to talk about oneself 143
4. Making oneself available in service and mutual support 144
5. Recognising together what has hurt us and moving forward in a reconciled relationship 144
II. FINDING ONE'S PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY 145
1. Knowing how to relate to the group 145
2. Integrating into the group and taking one's place in the community 145
3. Putting one's talents at the service of the community 146
III. BUILDING COMMUNITY LIFE 146
1. Embracing the gift of community life 147
3. Building the priory community together 147
a) Defining the priory's common values 147
b) Defining how the priory operates 148
3. Personal involvement in building the framework of the community 148
a) Getting involved in tasks and creating a supportive environment 148
b) Building a joyful and deeply human environment 149
4. Getting involved in community work 149
a) Involvement in the liturgy 149
b) Involvement in community intellectual work 149
c) Involvement in the priory's mission 150
5. Becoming part of the history of the priory 150
a) Learning about the history of the priory 150
b) Taking one's place in the priory's current history 151
IV. FORMATION IN GOVERNANCE 152
1. Knowing and taking part in the Institutions of the Congregation 153
2. Taking part in the conventual chapter 153
3. Learning to lead a group and to practise subsidiarity 154
V. TAKING UP POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION 155
1. Ongoing formation for priors 155
2. Formation of brothers who are priors for the first time 156
3. Formation of priors provincial 156
VI. BECOMING MEN OF COMMUNION 157
1. Living a spirituality of communion 157
2. Building communion within the Family of Saint John 157
3. Becoming a sign of communion for the Church 158
4. Artisans of God's plan for communion in the world 158

Chapter 12: APOSTOLIC FORMATION 159
I. PARTAKING IN THE HEART OF CHRIST THE APOSTLE 159
1. Participating in the compassion of Christ the Good Shepherd 159
2. Participating in the zeal of Christ the Apostle 159
3. Interceding with Christ the High Priest 160
II. SERVING THE CHURCH IN ITS MISSION 160
1. Receiving our mission from the Church 160
2. Adopting the attitude of a servant 161
3. Being formed so that our service might be one of quality 161
4. Learning to cooperate and "feel in harmony with the Church" 162
III. PASSING ON TO OTHERS WHAT WE HAVE CONTEMPLATED 162
1. Letting ourselves be evangelised and bearing witness to what we have seen 162
2. Formation in accompaniment, preaching, and teaching 163
a) Formation in accompaniment 163
b) Formation in preaching 164
c) Formation in teaching 164
3. Catering for those with a thirst for formation 165
4. Learning to awaken and accompany vocations 166
5. Learning to be apostles with our brothers and to bear witness through our fraternal communion 166
IV. SERVING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES 167
1. Learning to pass on the essential elements of the Christian life 167
2. Listening to the needs of the people and communities we serve 168
3. Fostering gifts and charisms 168
4. Being attentive to young people, couples, families, and those in need 169
a) Being attentive to young people 169
b) Being attentive to couples and families 169
c) Being attentive to the poor 170
6. Learning to lead a group 170
IV. FORMING APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT 171
1. Maturing in one's pastoral judgement 171
2. Learning to discern our missions and the direction of apostolic work 172
a) Examining the situation 172
b) Choosing with complete inner freedom 172
c) Surrendering our plans to God in prayer 172
d) Presenting our project to our authorities and obeying their decision 172
3. Following a path of community apostolic discernment 173
4. Taking sufficient time 173
5. Evaluating our experiences and listening to the Spirit 173
V. RECHARGING ONE'S BATTERIES 174
6. Taking time out for renewal 174
7. Finding support in supervision 174

PART THREE: Stages and Progression of Formation 175

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE 176
1. Formation considered as a journey 176
2. Presentation of the plan 176
3. Prescriptive value 176

SECTION ONE: Key Moments in Ongoing Formation 177

Chapter 13: SOME OF THE KEY MOMENTS IN ONGOING FORMATION 178

I. NEW BEGINNINGS AND PERIODS OF TRANSITION 178

1. New beginnings 178
   a) A brother's first assignment 178
   b) A brother's first steps in priestly ministry 179
   c) A brother's first steps in diaconal ministry 180
2. Periods of transition 181

II. PERIODS OF INTENSIVE FORMATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT 181

1. Formation for an apostolic or community mission 181
2. Postgraduate studies and consecrated life 181
3. Acquiring personal skills and proficiency 182

III. TIMES OF FULFILMENT AND JOYFUL FAITHFULNESS 182

1. Humble daily faithfulness 182
2. The joyful experience of spiritual fruitfulness 182
3. Jubilee celebrations 183

IV. PERIODS OF PAUSE AND REST 183

1. Sunday rest 183
2. Times of desert 183
3. Annual time of retreat 184
4. Times of "consolidation" 184
5. Sabbaticals 185

V. TIMES OF MORE INTENSE SPIRITUAL COMBAT 185

1. Loss of zeal 185
   a) The danger of routine 185
   b) The temptation to seek consolation away from Christ 186
   c) The risk of acedia 186
   d) Disappointment and disillusionment in mid-life 186
2. Crises 187
   a) Facing a crisis 187
   b) Accompaniment through crises 188
3. The trial of illness 188
4. Times when the community is tested by a brother 189

VI. OLD AGE: A TIME TO LET GO 190

1. An alternative way of supporting the mission and the community 190
2. Becoming dependant on others 190
3. The final Passover 190

SECTION TWO: Stages of Initial Formation 191

Chapter 14: THE PERIOD OF PRE-NOVITIATE 192

I. ACCOMPANYING VOCATIONS: THE PASTORAL CARE OF VOCATIONS 192

1. Accompanying someone's first steps 192
2. The pastoral care of vocations in conjunction with the local Church 193

II. THE PERIOD OF OBSERVERSHIP (ASPIRANTS) 193
1. The objectives of this period 193
a) Human and Christian growth 194
a) Discovering religious life and our charism 194
b) Verifying suitability 194
2. Personal accompaniment of the observer 195
3. Admission to the postulancy 195
4. The length of observership 195
III. POSTULANCY 195
1. The programme of formation during postulancy 196
a) Human formation 196
b) Spiritual formation 196
c) Formation in our charism and the specific nature of religious life 197
d) Intellectual formation 197
e) Apostolic formation 198
2. Personal accompaniment of the postulant 198
a) Accompaniment given by the Postulant Director 198
b) Spiritual accompaniment of postulants 199
c) Accompaniment by the community 199
3. Admission to the novitiate 199
4. Provincial amendments 199

Chapter 15: NOVITIATE 200
I. FORMATION PROGRAMME 200
1. Spiritual formation 200
a) Introduction to following Christ 200
b) Centring one's whole person on Christ 201
b) Adopting our way of life 201
2. The human dimension 202
a) Self-knowledge 202
b) Acquiring specific virtues 202
c) A sense of the truth 203
d) Freedom and responsibility 203
3. The intellectual dimension 203
4. Community formation 204
5. Apostolic formation 204
II. THE PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE NOVITIATE 205
1. Person-centred formation 205
2. Acting like an adult 205
3. A programme of formation designed as a journey to travel 205
4. Discernment for the gift of self 205
III. ADMISSIONS 206
V. THE NOVITIATE HOUSE AND THE NOVICE MASTER 206
1. The novitiate house 206
2. The Novice Master 206

Chapter 16: TEMPORARY PROFESSION 208
I. THE PARTICULAR CHALLENGES OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION 208
II. THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION 209
1. Philosophical studies 209
2. The period of placement in an apostolic priory 209
3. Theological studies 210
III. SUITABLE PEDAGOGY 211
1. General principles 211
2. Some specific principles 211
IV. THE PROGRAMME OF FORMATION 212
1. Spiritual formation 212
2. Human formation 213
a) Self-knowledge 213
b) Freedom and commitment 213
c) A healthy and balanced lifestyle 214
d) Educating affectivity 214
e) Work and taking on responsibility 215
3. Intellectual formation 216
a) Integrating studies into a brother's daily routine 216
b) Unifying knowledge around the Christian mystery and vocation 216
c) Acquiring good work habits 217
d) Work on culture 217
4. Formation in the vows 218
a) Embracing a new way of life 218
b) Going through a grieving process 218
5. Formation in community life 219
a) Fraternity 219
b) Actively participating in community life 220
c) Being a member of a community and a spiritual family 220
6. Formation in apostolic life 220
a) An apostle's heart 220
b) Integrating apostolic life into religious life 221
c) Acquiring skills and proficiency 222
V. PLACES OF FORMATION AND THE ROLE OF THE MASTER OF THE TEMPORARY PROFESSED 222
1. Places of formation 222
2. The responsibilities of the Master of the Temporary Professed 223
b) The pedagogical objectives inherent in his ministry 223
c) The Master of the Temporary Professed during the period of placement 224
VI. COUNCILS AND ASSESSMENTS 225
1. Pedagogical Councils 225
2. Reports 225
3. Council for the pathway to the priesthood 225
4. Councils for admission to perpetual profession 225

Chapter 17: FORMATION OF YOUNG PERPETUALLY PROFESSED BROTHERS STUDYING THEOLOGY . . . 226
I. THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF FORMATION . . . 226
1. The issues involved in this stage of formation . . . 226
2. Accompanying young perpetually professed students of theology . . . 226
3. Community life . . . 227
4. Cooperation with external institutes . . . 227
II. FORMATION SPECIFIC TO LAY BROTHERS . . . 227
III. FORMATION FOR BROTHERS PREPARING FOR THE PRIESTHOOD . . . 228

APPENDICES . . . 229

Appendix 1: GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE CONTENT OF THIS RATIO FORMATIONIS . . . 230
I. DIFFERENT PATHWAYS THROUGH THE *RATIO* FOR USE IN COMMUNITY CHAPTER . . . 230
II. WORK OF THE CONVENTUAL CHAPTER . . . 232
1. The involvement of the conventual chapter in formation . . . 232
2. Suggestions for implementing the *Ratio* . . . 233
III. READING BY THEME . . . 234
1. Leading the life of an apostle . . . 234
2. Taking care of one another . . . 234
3. Following Jesus after the example of John . . . 234
4. Deepening our life of contemplation . . . 235
5. Our place in the world . . . 235
6. Relations between clerical and non-clerical brothers . . . 235
7. Reconciling with oneself . . . 235
8. Getting spiritual help . . . 236
9. Persevering in one's vocation . . . 236
10. The conventual chapter . . . 236

Appendix 2: SUMMARY TABLE OF THE PRESCRIPTIVE VALUE OF THE PARTS OF THE RATIO . . . 237

Appendix 3: METHOD FOR DRAWING UP THE RATIO FORMATIONIS PROVINCIALIS . . . 238
I. DRAWING UP THE *RATIO FORMATIONIS PROVINCIALIS* . . . 238
1. The minimum points to be determined . . . 238
2. Recommended pathway for preparing the drawing up of the *Ratio Provincialis* . . . 239
3. Advice for drawing up the *Ratio* . . . 239
4. Plan of the Ratio Provincialis . . . 240
II. EXAMPLE OF A LOCAL PLAN OF FORMATION . . . 241
1. Proposed outline for a local plan of formation . . . 241
2. The customary of the house of formation . . . 242

Appendix 4: DEVISING PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANS OF FORMATION 243
I. DEVISING A PERSONAL PLAN OF FORMATION 243
II. DRAWING UP A PRIORY'S PROGRAMME OF FORMATION 244

Appendix 5: PROGRAMME OF FORMATION IN INTERCULTURALITY 247
I. ONGOING FORMATION 247
1. Culture and consecrated life 247
2. Pedagogy of formation in the field of culture 248
a) Knowing one's own culture and taking an interest in the culture of others 248
b. Learning to live together interculturally 249
c) Recognising God's action in culture and undertaking evangelical discernment 251
d) Engaging in mission in a culturally sensitive way 251
e) In dialogue with culture 251
3. Key moments 251
a) The first year of assignment 251
b) Change of assignment 252
c) A gradual stepping back from activity 252
II. RECOMMENDED PROGRAMME OF INITIAL FORMATION 252
1. Postulancy 252
2. Novitiate 253
3. Temporary profession 253
4. Apostolic placement 254
5. Theological formation 255

Appendix 6: PROGRAMME OF FORMATION IN THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY 256
I. ONGOING FORMATION WITH RESPECT TO DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY 256
1. The participation of every brother in formation in digital technology 256
a) Integrating the issue of digital technology into a comprehensive vision 256
c) Digital technology and mission 257
d) Digital technology as a means of formation 257
e) Digital etiquette 258
f) Criteria for growth 258
2. Community involvement 259
II. RECOMMENDED PATHWAY FOR INITIAL FORMATION 260
1. Before entry: for example, during postulancy 260
2. During the novitiate 260
3. Between temporary profession and apostolic placement 261
4. During apostolic placement 262
5. During the years of study after placement 263

GLOSSARY 265

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION 267

THEMATIC INDEX 269

ABBREVIATIONS

Acts 2022	Acts of the General Chapter of 2019
Acts 2022	Acts of the General Chapter of 2022
CCC	*Catechism of the Catholic Church*
CEF	Conférence des évêques de France (French Bishops' Conference)
CIC	*Code of Canon Law* (Codex Iuris Canonici)
CICLSAL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
COFSAA	Commission on Formation in Spiritual Accompaniment and Affectivity (2019-2022)
Const.	*Constitutions of the Congregation of Saint John* (2019)
Dir.	*Directory of the Congregation of Saint John* (2019)
DPSE	Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives Concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (1993)
DV	Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* (1965)
EG	Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013)
EN	Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)
FLC	CICLSAL, *Fraternal Life in Community* (1994)
FR	John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (1998)
GC 2019	Declaration of the General Chapter of the Congregation of Saint John 2019
GC 2022	Declaration of the General Chapter of the Congregation of Saint John 2022
GC 2022, Ch.	Text of the Congregation of Saint John General Chapter of 2022 on their Charism
GF	CICLSAL, *The Gift of Fidelity, the Joy of Perseverance* (2020)
GS	Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes* (1965)
IMB	CIVCSVA, *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* (2015)
LG	Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* (1964)
NW	CICLSAL, *New Wine in New Wineskins* (2017)
OT	Vatican Council II, *Optatam Totius* (1965)
PC	Vatican Council II, *Perfectae Caritatis* (1965)
PDV	John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992)
PI	CICLSAL, *Potissimum Institutioni* (1990)
PO	Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965)
RF	*Ratio Formationis Congregationis Santi Ioannis* (2022)
RFC	*Ratio Formationis Comission* (2016-2022)
RFIS	Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis (2016) (The Gift of the Priestly Vocation)*
SAFC	CICLSAL, *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millenium* (2000)
SAO	CICLSAL, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* (2008)
SC	Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*
SSP	*Special Status of the Provinces* voted for in the General Chapter of 2022
VC	John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (1996)
VD	Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (2010)

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. What is a ratio formationis?

1. §1. The Church requires every congregation to define its specific process of formation in a ratio formationis, that is, "a formation programme inspired by their particular charism, presenting clearly and in all its stages the course to be followed in order to assimilate fully the spirituality of the respective Institute. The ratio responds to a pressing need today. On the one hand, it shows how to pass on the Institute's spirit so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations, in different cultures and geographical regions; on the other hand, it explains to consecrated persons how to live that spirit in the different stages of life on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ" (VC 68).

§2. The Ratio Formationis Congregationis does not replace the Constitutions or the Directory but completes them by presenting the essential elements of formation and the pedagogical means of its implementation. It forms part of what Canon 587 calls the "other codes", that is, texts that complement the "fundamental code" of the constitutions.

§3. The Prior General promulgates the Ratio, in consultation with the Director General of Formation. He can nevertheless involve the Congregation with its writing and ask the General Chapter to validate its fundamental elements.

2. Why promulgate a ratio formationis at this time?

2. §1. The ratio formationis defines the spirit, norms, and means of formation in a congregation. It is a historical text that will evolve according to the conditions of the world, the Church, and the congregation. It must take into account the contemporary context of formation, the norms and orientations decreed by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and the specific charism of the community.

§2. Up to this point, the Constitutions, Directory, and even the Charter of Formation of 1995 have only partially responded to what the Church requires. It is primarily for this reason that the General Chapter of 2016 asked the Prior General to prepare a text which lays out the process of formation specific to our community and responds to the directives of the Church. Having now finished writing the document, it seems to us that in our current context of reform the Ratio will furnish every brother with reference points pertinent to their own path of formation. It has been nearly fifty years since the foundation of the congregation, and so it is fitting that substantive work has been undertaken to support the permanent, ongoing formation of the brothers.

§3. By virtue of its promulgation, the present Ratio Formationis Congregationis abrogates the previous Charter of Formation.

3. How was the ratio formationis drawn-up?

3. §1. Following the decision of the General Chapter of 2016, a committee was set up to write the Ratio Formationis. The committee first consulted other religious institutes and studied the requirements of the recent Magisterium. Following this it carried out a broad consultation of brothers and priories

throughout the Congregation. It was found that the very preparation of the Ratio Formationis itself became an extensive process of ongoing formation for all those who collaborated in the project. Indeed, many brothers were able to deepen their understanding of consecrated life, of our charism, and of formation in general or in a specific area.

§2. The committee went to great pains to take into account the opinion of a wide variety of brothers from all regions of the community, it collaborated with the Sisters of the Family of Saint John as much as possible, integrated the evolutions of the recent Magisterium of the Church, submitted its work to an observer external to the Congregation, and associated lay and consecrated women in the task.

§3. After having been informed of the main elements of the text and the intentions that governed its writing, the General Chapter of 2022 encouraged the Prior General to promulgate the document. Given the number of consultations undertaken, one might say that this document is the fruit of work carried out by the whole congregation, each having contributed according to their capacity.

4. What is the prescriptive value of the text?

4. §1. The Ratio Formationis defines the framework of formation for every brother of the Congregation. The text is normative, but its normative dimension does not have the same scope in every section. The main reference points of ongoing formation trace out the normative direction a brother's growth will take. However, the text also includes many passages that are advisory or explanatory in nature. Generally speaking, the chapters on initial formation have a prescriptive value for young brothers and formators. The normative value of the text is clarified for each part of the text, most often in the chapter or section introductions. A recapitulative table can be found in the appendices.

§2. Interpretation of the norms established by the Ratio Formationis should be undertaken in line with the Constitutions and Directories, which are the primary points of reference for our life and formation. However, given that the General Chapter of 2022 asked for the Constitutions to be revised, we should for the time being view this Ratio as the reference point most in line with the current intentions of the community on formation. The Ratio will, however, have to be gradually adjusted to the revised text of the Constitutions, which remain the principal norm of our life. A new version of the Ratio Congregationis will have to be promulgated once the new form of the Constitutions has been completed.

§3. It may be disconcerting to some that the Ratio will have to be re-worked so soon. The rapid evolution of these texts in the years to come is due to the current context of community reform. However, it is important that we become used to the fact that, by its very nature, the Ratio Formationis is a text with a limited lifespan. Even though it can genuinely help us to live out our charism today, the Ratio Congregationis is not like a founding text, which is written once and for all. In order to retain its relevance, it must be periodically revised according to the context of the Church, the world, and our Institute. In this sense, the successive versions of the Ratio Formationis Congregationis will always contain elements that are incomplete and imperfect—which in no way prevents a brother from finding in this Ratio a sure guide for his formation.

5. A text which primarily concerns ongoing formation

5. §1. One of the strengths of this Ratio Formationis is to have taken into account the fact that formation is not simply a preparation for living out our life; rather, it defines a dynamic constitutive of consecrated life. The formation with which this text is concerned is therefore permanent, ongoing formation. The aim of this document is to provide brothers of all ages, generations, and cultures with the pedagogical means that will help them to live out the charism of the community more deeply, listening to God on a daily basis so that their lives might bear fruit (*cf.* Jn 15: 5).

§2. Initial formation, which occupies its rightful place when it is considered a stage—albeit an essential one—of ongoing formation, is certainly not absent from the Ratio. Nevertheless, chapters on initial formation always come after those on ongoing formation so that initial formation might benefit from the light it offers.

6 Ratio Congregationis and Ratio Provincialis

6. §1. The Ratio Formationis Congregationis, which sets out the fundamental aspects of the formation of a Brother of Saint John, applies to the whole Congregation in each of its provinces. It must be complimented in each province by a Ratio Formationis Provincialis, which will take into account the conditions and issues specific to the region, as well as any other legitimate particularities.[1]

§2. Each Ratio Provincialis must specify the particular pedagogical, affective, intellectual, cultural, and missiological context of the region; it must identify any further elements specific to the region; it must describe how responsibility is to be shared out in the context of the region; it must provide guidelines for writing a programme for each of the houses of initial formation.

§3. The adaptation of the Ratio Formationis Congregationis to the province will be led by the Prior Provincial and his Formation Council. Listening and creativity should be encouraged in the process, with the goal of helping brothers persevere in their consecrated life and bringing sustainability to our missions. It is a process that will contribute to involving all brothers in the ongoing development, improvement and adjustment of formation in the community. It is desirable that the Provincial Chapter be consulted during the process of writing the Ratio Provincialis.

§4. Each Ratio Formationis Provincialis must be approved by the Prior General before being promulgated.

7. Plan of the document

7. §1. The Ratio Formationis Congregationis is made up of three parts, each of which is introduced within the text:

- The first part provides general guidelines on formation: the principal objective of formation, which is to form the Brothers of Saint John (Ch. 1) in our contemporary context (Ch. 2); the underlying dynamics of formation (Ch. 3) and the responsibilities of each brother (Ch. 4); specific aspects of initial formation (Chs 5-6).
- The second part sets out in detail the pedagogy of our ongoing formation, which operates according to the six dimensions of formation: spiritual formation (Ch. 7), human formation (Ch. 8), intellectual formation (9), religious formation in accordance with the vows (Ch. 10), community formation (Ch. 11), apostolic formation (Ch. 12).
- The third part addresses ongoing formation from the viewpoint of its different stages. It details the issues and pedagogy specific to each of the key periods of our pathway of formation (ch. 13), addressing at length the stages of initial formation (ch. 14-17), which prepare young brothers to enter fully into the life of a perpetually professed brother in ongoing formation (*cf.* VC 68).

§2. The document is completed by appendices on several specific points that would benefit from more focused attention or longer development.

1. See Appendix 3 on writing the *Rationes Provinciales*

8. How to use this text to good effect

8. §1. The Ratio Formationis was not initially designed to be read in one sitting, even though it is recommended that every brother read it in its entirety at least once[2]. Brothers will get more out of the text by taking it as a reference document that is read gradually, taking time to pose questions, both personally and in community. An approach by chapter or by theme is recommended (*cf.* Appendix 1).

§2. The Ratio is a reference that could be useful for the following purposes:

- For every brother to review the pathway he has travelled and use the Ratio as a catalyst to move forward in his ongoing formation by making use of the pedagogical tools proposed in each area or different key moment of formation.
- For brothers in initial formation to become actively engaged in formation and for formators to set up appropriate pedagogy.
- For houses of formation to establish their programme of local formation.
- For conventual chapters to take responsibility for the formation of each of their members and for their local community as a whole.
- For priors and brothers to help support those going through a difficult period.
- For each province—especially the Prior Provincial and the Director Provincial of Formation—to facilitate ongoing formation in their region, guide the writing of the Ratio Provincialis, and work on its implementation.

§3. The Ratio Congregationis was conceived above all to accompany every brother and every priory in its ongoing formation. It will therefore be a useful aid for the following:

- When working with a spiritual accompanier[3] or prior on an area in need of growth.
- To guide a personal review of our annual retreat or to enrich our examination of conscience.
- To take stock of our initial and ongoing formation and to identify areas in need of further work.
- To set up a plan of personal formation.
- To inspire an exhortation given by the prior or a fraternal exchange during a community chapter.
- To work on an area of growth for the community in conventual chapter.
- To animate community intellectual work or a provincial gathering.
- To encourage discussions between brothers on our vocation and the way it is lived out.

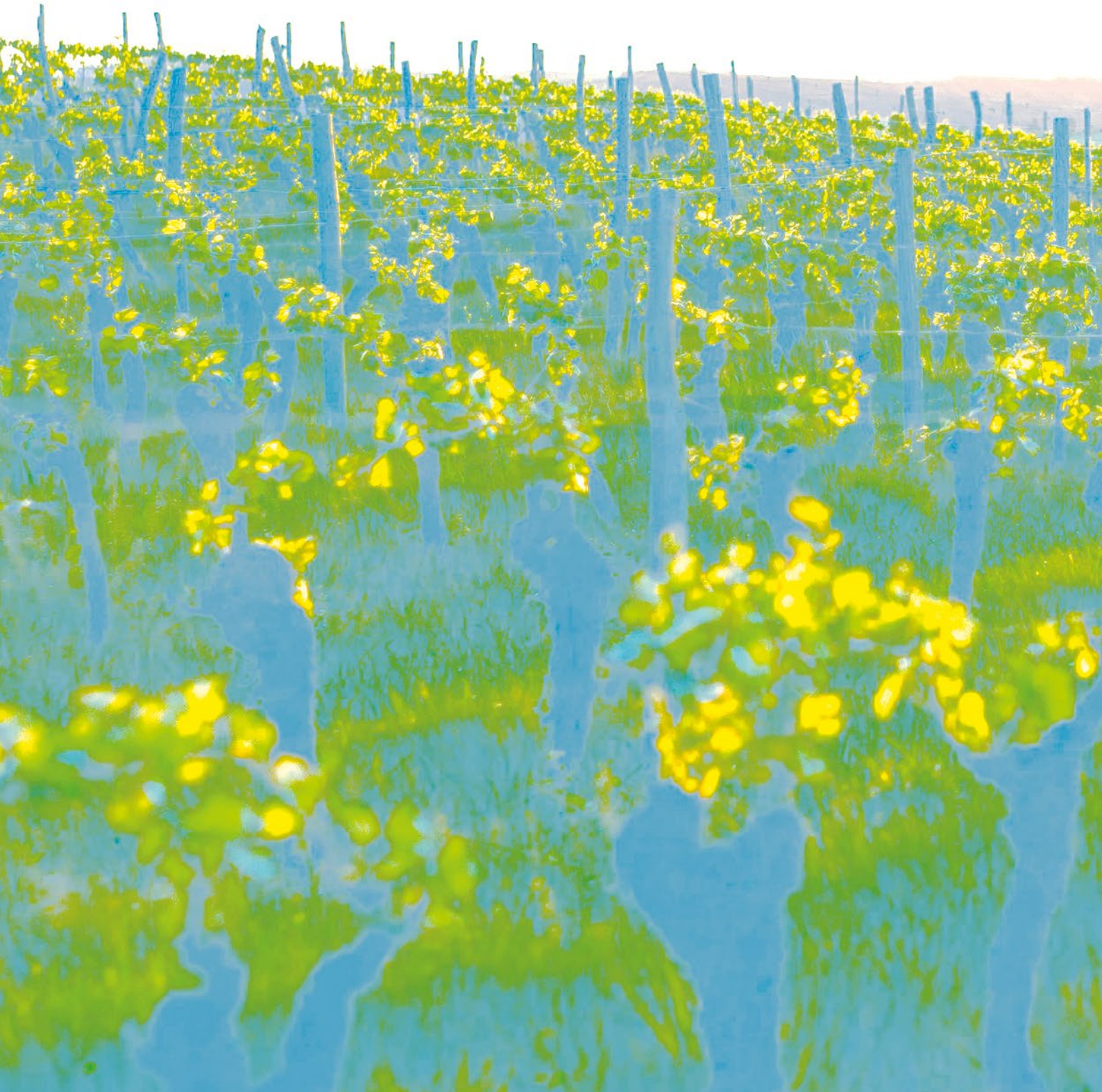
§4. Great benefit can be drawn from Appendix 1, which offers several reading pathways through the document and models of working sessions for the conventual chapter or intellectual work in common. The Index and Table of Contents will also be useful for selecting a subject to explore. To go further in a subject, it is sometimes useful to refer directly to the documents of the Magisterium mentioned in the text.

§5. The Ratio Formationis Congregationis will have fulfilled its purpose if it inspires discussions between brothers, brings a brother personal enrichment on a particular point, gives rise to a desire in a brother to go further and continue in his formation through personal reading or participation in organised sessions, and finally, if it contributes to the joy of responding as brothers to the same vocation… and, of course, if it then inspires its readers to write a better version of this document!

2. For brothers who have already completed their initial formation, it is above all recommended that they read chapters 1-4, 7-12, and 13.
3. See "Notes on the Translation," pp 274-75.

PART ONE

General Guidelines for Formation



INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

1. The aim of Part One

9. §1. In the period of reform we are currently going through, it seemed important to provide some guidelines—sometimes even very basic ones—on the nature of formation and the shape it takes in our community:

- Aspects of our life we can continue to reply on and need not fear should be highlighted (the richness of our charism, the solid aspects of our formation, the importance of the search for truth, etc.).
- Aspects that may have been lacking in the past or may not have been made sufficiently explicit should be clarified (the priority of ongoing formation, the integral character of formation, the ecclesial and apostolic nature of formation, the sharing of responsibilities in the growth of a brother, the importance of accompaniment, etc.).
- It is important that we more explicitly take account of the context in which we live (globalisation, digital culture, the confounding of esotericism and religion, etc.).
- Procedures for initial formation need to be updated and presented clearly, taking into account work already undertaken by formators over a number of years (such as the nature of adult formation, working in teams of formators, the distinction between a professor and a formator, etc.).

§2. The guidelines presented in Part One outline an overall vision of formation, which underpins the dynamic of continual growth proposed in the Ratio as well as the pedagogical work of initial formation. This framework is necessary if we are to understand what the content of our ongoing formation actually is (Part Two) and to make our own the means of growth proposed by the Congregation in accordance with the teaching of the Church, the tradition of consecrated life, and our charism (Part Three).

2. Plan of Part One

10. Part One is made up of three sections:

- Section One focuses on the principal object of formation: forming Brothers of Saint John, that is, religious shaped by the charism of our Congregation (Ch. 1) who seek to live daily from this grace in our contemporary context (Ch. 2).
- Section Two summarises what formation means for our Congregation. If a brother is to better cooperate in formation, he must have a grasp of its contours and underlying dynamics (Ch. 3). Formation will involve the input of multiple persons who each have a specific role to play (Ch. 4).
- Section Three focuses on the objectives of initial formation, which plays a decisive role in our journey of formation, despite being the first and inaugural stage. This section will set out the specific aims of this period of formation (Ch. 5) and the crucial role played by formators (Ch. 6).

SECTION ONE

Becoming a Brother of Saint John Today

Chapter One
ENTERING INTO OUR CHARISM

11. §1. The different elements that make up our vocation together give shape to an original form of Christian life and religious consecration: the charism of the Congregation of Saint John. Our charism is a gift given by the Holy Spirit to every brother of the Congregation for the benefit of the Church. If, then, we are to respond to God's call, we must transcribe this grace—a grace given to our Institute by the Spirit at the service of the Church—into our lives. By doing this we participate in the life of the Church, according to God's call, in communion with the other members of the Body of Christ.

§2. Formation of a Brother of Saint John therefore primarily consists in an ever more effective participation in the charism of the Congregation. It is the charism that guides our daily response to Christ's call within the Church. To become a Brother of Saint John, then, is to experience and deepen the spirit of our Institute (I), to participate in its specific mission within the Church (II), to espouse the Congregation's way of life (III), and to find one’s place in its history (IV).

I. DISCOVERING, EXPERIENCING, AND DEEPENING THE SPIRIT OF OUR INSTUTUTE

12. This section describes the different components that make up the experience we are given to live by the Spirit, which is at the heart of our vocation. Together these various aspects give shape to the form of holiness we are called to seek.

1. Following Jesus after the example of John and consecrating ourselves to him

13. §1. We want to lead a "religious life in the spirit of the beloved disciple" (GC 2022, Ch.) and so we take John as our pattern for consecrated life. "John, together with Mary, is among the first in a long line of men and women who, from the beginning of the Church until the end, are touched by God's love and feel called to follow the Lamb, once sacrificed and now alive, wherever he goes (*cf.* Rev 14: 1-5)" (VC 23).

§2. Our formation is thus based in a particular way on the figure and writings of the beloved disciple. "As privileged witness of the Paschal mystery, John lay his head upon the Lord's heart; he saw blood and water flow from the side of Jesus crucified, and, in the empty tomb, he believed in the Resurrection. His writings, interpreted in relation with the entirety of Scripture and within the living Tradition of the Church, nourish our consecration and renew our missionary fervour" (GC 2022, Ch.).

§3. In order to be able to follow Christ on this journey, we look to develop the three qualities Saint Thomas recognises in John: purity of heart, youthful zeal, and a penetrating understanding[4].

4. *Cf.* Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary of the Gospel of John*, no. 2639.

2. Becoming beloved disciples of Jesus and abiding in him through a life of contemplative prayer

14. §1. Tradition recognises John to be the "beloved disciple," who at the Last Supper lay his head upon the Master's heart (*cf.* Jn 13:23). Convinced that "the Lord wishes to make each one of us a disciple who lives in personal friendship with him"[5], we in turn wish to become beloved disciples of Jesus by being open to the grace of entering into an intimate relationship with him.

§2. "By calling himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," John manifests an aspect of the mystery of Christ. This is clearly not an exercise in self-exaltation, claiming to be loved more than the others! He is trying (...) to bring to light the mystery of divine friendship, that is, the mystery of the Lord's preferential love for every person. (...) He is trying to help us understand that if we love Jesus, it is because he first loved us; that if we have the slightest love for one another, it is because the love of God precedes us[6]."

§3. Friendship with Christ unfolds primarily in a life of contemplative prayer, through which we initiate dialogue with Christ in a living faith. Contemplative prayer holds a central place in our lives. "Our days are punctuated by times of community contemplative prayer. These times bring us together and offer us the opportunity to receive the word of God in a profound way and so to dwell in him. Contemplative prayer is at the heart of our vocation and of its renewal; through silent prayer we allow the Holy Spirit to work on us deep within; it gives fervour and impetus to our consecration and overflows into our brotherly and apostolic life" (GC 2022, Ch.)[7].

3. Participating in the priestly work of Christ and nurturing a missionary spirit

15. §1. We desire to unite ourselves to Christ so that we might participate in "his priestly work for the glory of the Father and the salvation of mankind, until he comes again" (GC 2022, Ch.). We therefore make our own Christ's priestly prayer for the salvation of mankind, which expresses the "entire missionary sense of John's Gospel (...). The ultimate purpose of mission is to enable people to share in the communion that exists between the Father and the Son. The disciples are to live in union with one another, remaining in the Father and the Son, so that the world may know and believe (*cf.* Jn 17:21-23)[8]."

§2. Following John's example, we wish to ardently proclaim the Gospel, maintaining "the joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow[9]." The first brothers of the community were struck when the Encyclical Evangelii Nuntiandi—which expressed so well what they wanted to live—was published on the same day they consecrated themselves to the Trinity through the hands of Mary: 8 December, 1975. We therefore wish to remain attentive, both creatively and audaciously, to the needs of the rapidly changing world, so that we might lead those whom we meet to Christ. The

5. *Cf.* Benedict XVI, General Audience of 5 July 2006, "John, son of Zebedee".
6. Brother Thomas Joachim, *Letter to Brothers on the Fortieth Anniversary of the Community*, 8 December 2015.
7. Translator's note: slightly modified from the original translation, which translated "oraison" as "silent prayer", rather than 'contemplative prayer'.
8. *Cf.* John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, no. 23. The Pope continues: "This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that we are missionaries above all because of what we are as a Church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before we become missionaries in word or deed."
9. Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 80: "Let us therefore preserve our fervor of spirit. Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow. May it mean for us- as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history- an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world."

emphasis on philosophy in our formation helps prepare us to dialogue with all people, whether or not they are believers.

§3. In the Book of Revelation, John shows "acute pastoral sensitivity to persecuted Christians, whom he exhorts to be steadfast in the faith and not to identify with the pagan world." To do this, he transmits to them "the revelation, starting with the death and Resurrection of Christ, of the meaning of human history[10]." Trial and tribulation are part and parcel of the Christian life. With Christ, there is a combat to be had between light and darkness, truth and sin. "Our vocation binds us to the Apocalypse and to hope in Christ's return[11]." We draw a powerful hope from John's testimony, which gives life to our mission and sustains our perseverance: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus![12]"

4. Obeying the commandment to love and leading a fraternal life in common

16. §1. Like John, the indefatigable witness to the "new commandment[13]," we welcome the commandment of brotherly love as an essential part of following Christ. We understand that love of God is inseparable from love of neighbour (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:20) and desire to live by this love.

§2. From the very beginning of our Community, the first brothers felt that fraternal life in common was something important. Based around the Eucharist, our community life is sustained by contemplative prayer in common, simplicity in our relations with one another, joint engagement in service, an apostolic life in common, and a common search for truth in every aspect of our life. All members of our Institute, whether clerical or not, wish to live as brothers, without distinction of rank.

§3. Our vocation is shared—albeit in different ways—with the Apostolic Sisters, the Contemplative Sisters, and the Oblates of Saint John, who together form the Family of Saint John. Our formation must enable each of us to find our place within this spiritual family and strengthen the ties that unite us.

5. Seeking truth for the sake of charity and engaging in study

17. §1. Like John, "fellow worker in the truth" (3 Jn 8), "We hear the call to be consecrated in the Truth. This means offering Jesus our whole person, allowing him to sanctify us in all our capacities: affective, intellectual and moral, and seeking the truth in all areas of our lives, from study to community life and apostolate" (GC 2022, Ch.).

§2. The search for truth in our daily lives commits us to the path of charity. It orients us towards Christ and is part of our path to holiness, at the service of the Church and of the world. Our search for truth must be supported by an integral formation that teaches us to "walk in the truth." "Every circumstance in our life can thus be an opportunity to deepen our search for truth[14]" (GC 2022, Ch.).

§3. By engaging in philosophical and theological inquiry, which establishes fruitful dialogue between faith and reason, "we want to open ourselves to receiving the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom" (GC 2022, Ch.). Special place is given in our search for truth—which is not limited solely to study—to meditating on the word of God (lectio divina, theology, etc.), whilst philosophy stimulates our questioning and teaches us to seek out the deeper meaning of things.

---

10. Benedict XVI, *General Audience of 23 August 2006*, "John, the Seer of Patmos".
11. Brother Thomas Joachim, *Letter to Brothers for the Fortieth Anniversary of the Community*, 8 December 2015.
12. Rev 22:20.
13. *Cf.* Jn 13:34. Saint Jerome reports that, towards the end of his life, the Apostle John kept repeating, "Little children, love one another." Somewhat wearied by this, his disciples asked him why he always said the same thing, to which John replied, "Because it is the Lord's commandment, and if we do only this, enough has been done!" (*Quia praeceptum Domini est, et si solum fiat, sufficit*.) (Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians, III, VI, v. 10, Patrologiae Latinae VII, col. 433).
14. *Cf.* 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 3-4; See also 1 Jn 1: 6: "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth".

§4. "The 'search for truth,' through time dedicated to study and intellectual reflection, is one of the dimensions of [our] charism. It is not reserved to the period of initial formation alone but is an ongoing part of our lives (…). It is a fitting response to the need to proclaim the Gospel and the Church's thinking to contemporary society, which is both demanding and highly qualified, so that Christians might be strengthened in their faith[15]."

§5. Our life of study takes the form of a search for God, who is the First Truth. Intellectual work develops a "passion for truth" in us that resonates with our "passion for Christ," which is what animates our vocation. We believe that by applying ourselves to study we draw closer to God and to mankind.

6. Being nourished by the Bread of Life at Mass and in Eucharistic adoration

18. §1. The Eucharist plays an important role in our path to holiness and in our pedagogy. "The celebration of the Mass is the source and summit of our day and extends into daily community Eucharistic adoration. We draw from the Mass the graces needed to revitalise our personal relationship with Christ, to live life in community and to support our fervour in apostolate" (GC 2022, Ch.).

§2. Meditation on the Johannine writings supports our daily reception of Christ in the Mass and in Eucharistic adoration. Although the institution of the Eucharist does not feature in John's Gospel, his many allusions to the flesh of Christ and to the mystery of the Bread of Life resonate with our Eucharistic spirituality. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist we live by Christ, of whom the Fourth Gospel offers a portrait of great theological and spiritual density. Furthermore, the account of the washing of the feet in John's Gospel underlines the continuity between remembrance of the paschal mystery and putting the new commandment into practice.

7. Taking Mary into our home

19. §1. With John at the foot of the Cross[16], we receive Mary as our mother so that she can bring about our new birth into religious life. She accompanies us on our pilgrimage of faith and our journey of consecration. We receive her as "a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ" (LG 63). She brings us closer to Jesus and teaches us to place our trust in him.

§2. When we invite Mary into our hearts she disposes us, like she did at Cana, to listen to the will of Christ and to obey him, thus preparing us for "Jesus' hour." She is present with us when the trial of the Cross enters our lives. Her intercession thus enables us to unite ourselves, as beloved disciples, to Christ's offering. When we call to her for help, she sustains us in our trial and inspires our perseverance in consecrated life and on the path of chastity[17]. "She is the one who teaches us how to be faithful to our calling each day" (GC 2022, Ch.).

---

15. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Letter of 22 June 2016 to the Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John*, no. 2. The paragraph ends by saying, "In a period tempted by fideism and relativism, this is a legitimate part of the origins of your foundation and must endure."
16. *Cf.* John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 23: "One can say that if Mary's motherhood of the human race had already been outlined, now it is clearly stated and established. It emerges from the definitive accomplishment of the Redeemer's Pashcal Mystery. The Mother of Christ, who stands at the very center of this mystery – a mystery which embraces each individual and all humanity – is given as mother to every single individual and all mankind. The man at the foot of the Cross is John, 'the disciple whom he loved.' But it is not he alone. Following tradition, the Council does not hesitate to call Mary 'the Mother of Christ and mother of mankind': since she 'belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all human beings… Indeed she is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ… since she cooperated out of love so that there might be born in the Church the faithful.'"
17. John's virginity was recognised very early on in the tradition (*cf. Acts of John*, Pseudo-Clement, Saint Ephraim). Saint Jerome saw John's virginity as the fruit of his bond with the Virgin Mary, saying that "The Virgin Mother was entrusted by the Virgin Lord to the Virgin disciple" (*a Domino virgine, mater virgo, virgini discipulo commendatur*) (*Adversus Jovinianum*, 1, 26, Patrologiae latinae, XXIII, col. 248). This theme was further developed in the Middle Ages (*cf. Speculum Virginum*, 5. 1185-99, CCCM 5, Turnhout, Brepols, 1990, p. 154).

8. Loving and serving the Church as we await the coming of Christ

20. §1. Like John the Apostle, we want to love and serve the Church, the Lamb's bride. This means developing an authentic love for the Holy Father and the bishops, expressed in sincere obedience, as well as respect for all the parts that make up the Church. Our formation seeks to deepen our communion with, and sense of, the Church.

§2. Despite its enigmatic character, the vocation of the beloved disciple to "remain" until Jesus comes (*cf.* Jn 21:23) does not mean that he is removed from the common vocation of Christians. It is a vocation that traces out a mysterious path to holiness, which must be lived in the service of the People of God and in communion with the hierarchy of the Church.

§3. Interpreted in this way, the call to "remain until Jesus comes" resonates strongly in our hearts. Attentive to the coming of the Lord—which already takes place through faith, grace, and the sacraments, and will one day take place definitively—we seek to live already here on earth in communion with the Church in heaven and to serve the Church as we await the day when we will see the heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

9. Bearing witness to what we have contemplated

21. §1. The different aspects mentioned above offer us a powerful and original spiritual experience, nourished by the writings and experience of John, according to our specific charism. This experience prompts us to testify, according to the dynamic expressed in the prologue of John's first letter: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—(...) we proclaim to you" (1 Jn 1:1-4).

§2. John's testimony is inseparable from his spiritual experience. Tradition has thus seen in the gesture of the Last Supper the source of the contemplative character of what is revealed in his Gospel: "from the Lord's bosom [John] drank in the secrets of His mysteries; he, the man who by drinking from the Lord's bosom indited of His Godhead, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God[18]". Having also benefited from a powerful experience of Christian life, we wish to bear witness to that experience among the people we meet.

§3. We are thus called to share in the mission of the Church through the witness of our lives, the activities of our formation, and the witness of our community. This demands of us authenticity and a spirit of conversion, for "Prophecy derives a particularly persuasive power from consistency between proclamation and life" (VC 85).

§4. When we speak of Christ to the contemporary world we must do so as disciples familiar with his mystery; for as Paul VI said, in comments still relevant today: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses[19]."

---

18. St Augustine, *Homilies on First John*, Homily 1, 8.
19. *Cf.* Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 41: "For the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, 'Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.'" See also Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, no. 150: "People prefer to listen to witnesses: they 'thirst for authenticity' and 'call for evangelizers to speak of a God whom they themselves know and are familiar with, as if they were seeing him'"; Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Homily for the Mass before the conclave, 18 April, 2005: "'It was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure' (Jn 15: 16). It is here that appears the dynamism of the life of a Christian, an apostle: I chose you to go forth. We must be enlivened by a holy restlessness: a restlessness to bring to everyone the gift of faith, of friendship with Christ. Truly, the love and friendship of God was given to us so that it might also be shared with others. We have received the faith to give it to others–we are priests in order to serve others. And we must bear fruit that will endure."

II. WORKING FOR THE MISSION OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD

22. We develop specific apostolates in the spirit of our charism to serve our mission in the local churches. We serve the Church through the offices and tasks we receive from the bishops and through engagement in our aforesaid missions.

1. Contributing to the mission of the Church by offering human and Christian formation

23. Our primary engagement with the evangelising mission of the Church is through human and Christian formation. We see this formation as a service offered to those who thirst for an encounter with Christ and those who thirst for formation (youth, families, Christian communities, non-believers, etc.). The formation we offer falls mainly within the fields of philosophy, theology, and spirituality, and aims to contribute to a dialogue between faith and reason. It often takes the form of personal accompaniment, teaching, or preaching; but it can be offered in a number of other forms: supporting the formation of Christian communities (serving parishes, shrines, etc.), social work or works of mercy, academic formation, education programmes for young people, etc.

2. Making our communities into places of prayer, charity, and light

24. "We are called to make our communities into places where love and truth come together. We therefore desire to live together in service and simplicity, in the spirit of joy and sharing, in seeking the truth, and listening to God in his word and in our whole lives. Our priories are intended to be homes which radiate prayer, charity and light" (GC 2022, Ch.). And so, "In various ways in the different priories and through our life of prayer, of mission in common, and of brotherly cooperation, we desire to make of our community life a place of welcome where each person can discover the love of Christ and walk with him" (GC 2022, Ch.).

III. BEING FORMED IN OUR WAY OF LIFE

1. Living by our Constitutions

25. The Constitutions set out our way of life (*cf.* Can. 587). To be formed in our way of life, then, it is necessary for a brother to be familiar with the Constitutions of the Congregation and all its associated documents, so that they become the reference for our way of life.

2. Formation for an evangelical life of contemplation and apostolate

26. Like Saint Dominic[20], our desire is to become "men of the Gospel," leading lives that are both contemplative (structured around prayer in common) and apostolic (devoted mainly to mission). Our life of consecration, seeking the truth, and prayer in common thus blossoms forth into an apostolic life. When polarised tensions arise between different competing aspects of this life, priorities must be set through both personal judgment and community decision making.

3. Making time for study and formation

27. Our way of life is also punctuated by time dedicated to study and formation, both personally and in community. This is an important dimension of our life, and so explicit time is given to it in our personal and community schedules. Even when our apostolic and community tasks are time consuming, we must seek to make time for formation. Devoting regular time to study helps us to keep alive the desire to find God in everything and every event, the motivation to understand the nature of the things we experience, and the love of truth in our daily lives.

4. Leading a fraternal life in common guided by the discernment of the conventual chapter

28. Our conventual fraternal life is based on a common search for truth and sharing with one another in conventual chapter, in accordance with the Constitutions. Each of us is responsible for building a life of fraternal communion by taking up our place in the conventual chapter: "The various chapters (general, regional, and conventual) play an important role in responding to our common calling. The vitality of our communities involves each brother's participation, which allows them to discern together the orientations to be taken in the lives of our priories and in their apostolate" (GC 2022, Ch.).

5. Incorporating elements of monastic origin

29. Our Congregation is not monastic, but our style of community life is characterised by elements of monastic origin, which we received through the influence of the Dominicans and the period we spent at the Abbey of Lérins: the permanent wearing of the habit, the celebration of the office in common, the way in which we organise our convents, silence in the cloister, life in cell, the celebration of chapters, and the way we organise our meals in common. Our life also includes times of solitude and desert. We must learn to incarnate these different historically inherited elements and bring them to bear fruit in our fraternal, apostolic, and contemplative life.

---

20. *Cf.* John Paul II, *Letter to Fr Marie-Dominique Philippe in thanks for the good wishes sent him at Christmas*, 29 December 1988: "I also thank your confreres of the Community of Saint John for the kind thoughts and filial affection they have for the Successor of Peter. In their consecrated lives of service to the truth and to the Church, may they imitate Saint Dominic, their founder, whose work and scientific knowledge was united to an example of simplicity and a spirit of prayer, offered solely for the praise and glory of God."

IV. LETTING OUR CHARISM SHINE FORTH

1. Knowing the history of our Congregation

30. To understand our charism, spirituality, and way of life, which are all gifts from God, we must also look to our history. The formation of a brother should include knowledge of the history of the Congregation, which will help him to discern the gifts God has given to our Community. By knowing the Congregation's history, every brother will in turn be able to become a part of that history, which is enriched and passed on from generation to generation.

2. Developing the life of our charism

31. §1. A charism is given so that it might be lived, safeguarded, deepened, and developed (*cf.* CICLSAL, Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes, no. 16). It is something that is manifested through time, and so it contains within it the hope that it will bear new fruits for the Community in the future.

§2. This is clearly manifested every time our charism is shared within a specific culture. As the General Chapter of 2019 affirmed, "we feel an urgency to share our spiritual patrimony with the diverse cultures to which we have been sent since the beginnings of the community".

§3. The involvement of each brother in keeping the charism alive necessitates that he be able to speak frankly in the different chapters when he sees an important aspect of the charism being misunderstood or the Constitutions not being respected.

3. Participating in ongoing formation and enabling our charism to unfold

32. §1. Living by the charism of the Community brings the different components of a brother's life into balance. The charism gives shape, in an original and synthetic way, to the characteristics of Christ each of us is called to bring to life through consecrated life. It marks the faith of every brother, permeates his way of praying, living, sharing, and bearing witness. It touches upon every moment of his life in a unique way, bringing unity to all the dimensions of his consecration, in harmony with the other brothers. The charism helps form a brother's new identity; it is like a fibre of his very being as he journeys to holiness.

§2. Our formation should make us aware of the unifying role of our charism and remove any obstacle from this. Although every member of the Congregation is responsible for the charism, it is the Community's task to continuously enliven the brothers' awareness of the charism and to offer stable pathways of formation and evangelical perfection[21]. The charism is a specific way of living out consecration, of interpreting the evangelical counsels, and of living in relationship with others. It disposes us to a particular type of apostolate. Our formation should therefore cultivate the behaviours and attitudes, sensibilities and aspirations, moral qualities and necessary virtues that translate these ways concretely[22].

§3. The charism is both a part of tradition borne by the Holy Spirit and the Community's patrimony carried forth by its members. To be formed according to our charism is therefore first and foremost to develop an attentive ear to the Spirit.

---

21. *Cf.* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, no. 2.
22. *Cf.* Congregation for Bishops, CICLSAL, *Mutuae Relationes*, no. 11.

4. Care for vocations in the Congregation

33. §1. Active participation in our charism entails supporting the emergence of vocations, keeping in prayer younger brothers in formation, and taking part in the discernment of their religious profession and call to ordination. Every time a new vocation arises, we welcome the new grace God gives to our Institute through the brother who joins us.

§2. Bringing the charism to life also means taking care of the brothers who share in the same vocation. We should be attentive to every brother, especially the more fragile. Brothers who journey towards their ultimate encounter with the Lord in a spirit of meekness and gentleness are living signs and witnesses that faithfulness to our vocation is possible. In their fragility and sometimes their infirmity, they deserve to be accompanied with respect, gentleness, and sensitivity.

Chapter 2
THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND DIRECTION OF FORMATION

34. §1. God's call is heard in a specific time, place, and culture. The context in which His call is heard is by no means insignificant and therefore plays an important role in our formation and mission. It is thus in relation to the contemporary context of the Congregation, the Church, and the world that the Community defines the priorities of formation which permeate this Ratio Formationis.

§2. In order to offer an appropriate pedagogical response to the contemporary challenges of formation, the Ratio Formationis Congregationis is a document that must be periodically renewed in light of an evangelical discernment of the past and present. The Ratio Formationis Provincialis and the local plan of formation will complete this discernment by identifying the local context that will influence formation and mission.

§3. This chapter does not offer a perspective that is normative. Instead, it will help brothers analyse the influence of the contemporary context on their own journey and will help formators in their accompaniment of younger brothers.

I. THE CURRENT TURNING POINT IN OUR CONGREGATION

1. Reform of the Congregation and distancing from the founder

35. §1. Since 2013, the revelation of abuse committed by our founder and a number of brothers has led the Congregation to undertake a work of reform. In 2019, the General Chapter stated: "Given that the charism is a life according to the Holy Spirit, Fr Philippe cannot be a role model for that life, because of the abuse he committed. Consequently, the Brothers will no longer refer to him as a norm in order to renew their charism today[23]." As a consequence, "General Chapter 2022 (...) considered that the Rule of Life can no longer be a reference for our life (...). General Chapter 2022 recognized the primordial character of the Constitutions as an expression of our vocation and way of life, and wants to focus the work of reform for the coming years on them[24]."

§2. Guided by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the discernment of the Church, we wish to renew our understanding of our charism and the way in which we put it into practice, so that this spiritual resource “augments both the progress of the members of [our religious family] and the welfare of the entire Body of Christ[25].” With help from the Church, we have become aware that this work of reform entails developing ongoing and integral formation adapted to all the brothers of the Community.

23. *Declaration of the General Chapter of 2019*, "Relationship to the Founder".
24. *Declaration of the General Chapter of 2022*, "Fundamental Texts".
25. LG 43; *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Letter of 22 June 2016 to the Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John*, no. 1.

2. Decentralisation

36. §1. In order to promote subsidiarity, we opted for "'the center of gravity for decision making' [to be] moved to the regional level, so that there can be greater proximity and communion with local priories, with the Prior General remaining at the service of the unity of the entire Community[26]."

§2. "This movement is now part of the synodal path to which Pope Francis invites the whole Church" (GC 2022). It will allow us to accentuate collegiality, which we have favoured as a mode of government since our foundation.

§3. This process will also allow for decentralisation away from France and Europe. It will enable us—and indeed makes more pressing the need—to focus attention on the multiplicity of cultures in the Community and to take better account of the different ways of thinking and governing.

3. Internationalisation of the Congregation

37. §1.We view the expansion of our Congregation throughout the world, which took place very early on in our history, as a gift from God. Thanks to rapid growth we were able to "generously [respond] to requests coming from multiple horizons[27]". We see this diversity as a gift. We all bear a common patrimony and are enriched through encountering the different cultures of the brothers and those we meet on mission. Nevertheless, the rooting of our Institute in many different countries presents its own challenges in terms of communion, formation, and governance.

§2. Ever since the Community was founded, formation of the majority of brothers has for the most part taken place in Switzerland (1975-1981) or France (1981-2022). "Even though for years now an important effort has been made in our formation houses throughout the world to better take into account the variety of cultures, we had to recognize that this has not always been the case, that some brothers have suffered from it and some remain hurt. We still need to make progress in welcoming our brothers and being open to their cultural characteristics" (GC 2022).

II. ECCLESIAL CHALLENGES FOR CONSECRATED LIFE

1. The challenges of commitment and perseverance

38. In a world which believes in nothing definitive and in which the idea of an irrevocable choice has all but disappeared, responding to a vocation or persevering in religious commitment is becoming increasingly difficult. The departure of people from consecrated life calls for analysis, intercession, and the development of a ministry of accompaniment. When considering vocations it is important that we engage in appropriate pastoral care, but we must also bear in mind that a lack of vocations can sometimes be "due to a lack of contagious apostolic fervour" and a life that fails to enthuse or attract others (*cf.* EG 107).

---

26. *Message of the Second Session of the General Chapter of 2019*, 1 November 2019. "C. Decentralisation".
27. CICLSAL, *Letter of 22 June 2016 to the Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John*, no. 1: "You rapidly grew and generously responded to requests coming from multiple horizons. Sometimes you underestimated the cultural problems you would face and problems in the life of the particular churches. Fragility often manifested itself in terms of perseverance. Taking inspiration from numerous other international institutes, you must find some balance: the place of the noviciate and of formation, regional or vicarial structures, concern for the capacities of each person when assigning them to different posts".

2. Challenges faced in religious life today

a) A challenge for consecration through the profession of the evangelical counsels

39. §1. We are convinced of the value of consecrated life in today's world. "Greed, the craving of pleasure, the idolatry of power, the triple concupiscence which marks history and is also at the root of present evils can only be overcome if the Gospel values of poverty, chastity and service are rediscovered" (RC 45).

§2. A number of taboos that in the past prevented honest conversation about sexuality and sometimes led to a state of immaturity have been lifted in modern society, making it much easier to hold open and constructive dialogue in this domain. However, the eroticisation of society and the lack of clear limits in the field of sexuality has resulted in a more complex process of maturation in the way people relate to themselves and to others and to greater fragility in the exercise of the vow of chastity.

§3. As the inviolable dignity of the human person progressively becomes a universal value, the practice of obedience must find expression in a way that respects the person as a unique and original human being endowed with freedom, while offering them the possibility of partaking in real evangelical obedience. This requires an exercise of authority that values personal freedom and constructive dialogue.

§4. As technical progress and economic development bring about a fairly global rise in living standards, our vow of poverty is being expressed in new ways. While we commit ourselves to people who have nothing, it is important that we are also able to identify new forms of poverty in today's world and respond to them in a way that corresponds to our charism. This calls for the prudent use of our goods in conformity with the Gospel and with a view to mission.

b) A challenge for life in common

40. Insistence upon the unique value of every person is something to be treasured in the world today. It helps highlight the unique and original place of every person in the community. Developments in systemic psychology bring to light the important role played by the community in a person's life and growth. While avoiding the traps of individualism or communitarianism, our formation must enable every brother to fully participate in community life and at the same time find their own place within fraternal life, where they are able to flourish on a personal level.

c) A challenge for mission

41. While evangelisation is very fruitful in certain parts of the world, the Church in the West is facing a general shift toward de-Christianisation, which calls for a new evangelisation. Within the varied situations it encounters, the Church looks to consecrated people today to exercise their prophetic ministry by responding with audacity and freedom of spirit "to the calls of the spirit and the provocations of history" (NW 32). The recommendations proposed by Pope Francis in Evangelii Gaudium are a very useful guide in this area.

3. The abuse crisis

42. Abuse—sexual abuse, abuse of authority, or abuse of conscience—committed in the Church and in our own community is a source of shame for the whole Christian community. The light that has been shone on this abuse must bring about a heightened awareness of the need to care for those who are primarily affected: the victims. It must also set in motion efforts to adjust the way in which we relate

to others. In this battle, the Church is supported by those in the contemporary world who urge her to act with justice. The Gospel must be our inspiration in responding to the challenges involved: the prevention of abuse of any kind, accompanying those who have been hurt, restoring justice, accepting responsibility, and seeking authentic conversion on the part of those who committed the abuse.

4. Readjusting our vision of the priesthood

43. §1. The development of synodality and the growing involvement of lay people in the life of the Church and in mission are opportunities for the Church. Nevertheless, the temptation of clericalism, which wounds the spirituality of communion and hinders mission, lies in wait for both clerics and lay people alike. We must all be conscious of the fact that "In the Church, functions 'do not favour the superiority of some vis-à-vis the others'[28]." The beauty of the priestly vocation is only fully realised when it is understood as a priesthood of service to the baptised. Within consecrated life, "the Spirit fosters the presence of Religious Brothers in clerical congregations. Their presence is important (...) above all because, in these congregations, Religious Brothers are a permanent reminder of 'the fundamental dimension of brotherhood in Christ' which all members should strengthen" (IMF 11).

§2. The amount of time it took for acts of paedophilia committed by priests to be revealed has shown that an unhealthy valorisation of the priesthood had prevented or delayed their denunciation. The sin of a certain number of priests has cast a dark shadow over every priest and obscured the beauty of the priestly vocation. The situation requires renewed perseverance from priests and the patience necessary to bear the critical gaze of society. It also invites us to share a more appropriately adjusted vision of the priesthood and to recover our zeal for priestly holiness.

5. The question of the place of women in the Church

44. Awareness of the dignity of women and their role in the building of a new society is growing. The active presence of women at all levels of ecclesial life, as well as their increasing involvement in processes of discernment and decision-making, are positive developments for the Church. As religious or priests we are called to cooperate with a number of women, most notably with the Sisters of the congregations of the Family of Saint John. We must therefore appropriately re-align our vision of the complementarity of men and women, put in place good practices for our collaboration, and contribute to creating "still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church" (EG 103).

III. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR FORMATION AND MISSION

45. §1. Living in the world, we gain a sense of the promises it offers and the burdens it entails. We must develop an awareness of the challenges faced in the environments from which we come and reach out to the men and women of today through our ministry. In order to identify the challenges of the world we live in, we must be able to identify the obstacles it faces, but we must also be able to recognise the gifts of the Spirit and the seeds of the Word. Having an open ear to our rapidly changing world will guide us in making the necessary ongoing adjustments to our way of life and our formation.

§2. The changing world of today has shifted the way in which people conceive of God and religion, mankind, interpersonal and social relationships, the meaning of life, and our relationship

28. EG, no. 104; *cf.* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration* Inter Insigniores *on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* (15 October 1976). VI.

with creation and the societies in which we live. These different aspects represent the challenges we must face in both our formation and our apostolic life.

1. A changed perspective on God and the religious dimension of man

46. The way we relate to God and the religious dimension of man is thus marked by the following:

a) Atheism and religious indifference: The rejection of religion, considered by some to be a danger to humanity, has had a great impact on Western societies. The rise of materialism has progressively led to a sort of religious indifference almost everywhere in the world. Faced with the various theoretical and practical atheisms of our time, the faithful are called to seek out common and consistent responses beyond any religious barrier. We need to revise obsolete representations of God and propose a faith relevant to the conditions of modern man.

b) A new religiosity: Despite the rejection of God and of religion, a type of spiritual searching inhabits the hearts of many people today. This contemporary spiritual desire, which frequently goes hand in hand with the idea that all religions are equal, is often not so different from a search for wellbeing and can lead to a type of religious consumerism. The widespread thirst for spirituality, which rightly values interiority, often finds an outlet in esotericism and pseudo-mystical movements, without leading to a personal encounter with God. While recognising the real insights these different spiritual paths can often contain, the Christian community must bear witness to God's initiative, who comes to meet men and women in Jesus Christ[29].

c) The development of sects: Almost everywhere in the world, sectarian styled religious movements that offer alternative spiritual paths are regularly emerging. Some develop a theology of prosperity and healing that attracts many people seeking consolation. Local Catholic communities must, for their part, be able to offer an experience of community that is open and welcoming, and which preserves the freedom of every member, offering people the message of the Gospel with the conviction that the Gospel responds to the deepest longings of the human heart and leads to an integral development of the person.

d) The marginalisation of Christianity in society: The distinction between Church and State in countries of Christian origin makes possible an ecclesial life appropriately adjusted in its relationship with society. However, relations between Church and State are often weakened by political and ideological conditions, including healthcare provision. As a result, Christians are sometimes disparaged in the media, discriminated against, or even persecuted. This challenges the local churches to courageously bear witness to their hope and their convictions.

29. On this subject, see the document: Pontifical Council for Culture, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life. A Christian reflection on the "New Age"*, 2003.

2. A new vision of man

47. Our conception of man is modified and challenged by:

a) Technological development and transhumanism: Technical progress is constantly opening up new horizons that contribute to the wellbeing of individuals and populations. It can also lead to transhumanism, which seeks to push back the limits of the human condition indefinitely and to liberate it from death. In order to give this endeavour new direction, wisdom and careful reflection are needed. New situations resulting from technical development lead to more complex ethical choices. This requires the better forming of one's conscience so that freedom can be exercised in a way that respects human dignity and the natural law.

b) Gender theory: The contemporary approach to the difficult question of "gender" highlights important aspects on the subject of sexual identity; it also creates confusion that can disrupt a person's growth and their developing awareness of personal identity. "Gender theory (especially in its most radical forms) speaks of a gradual process of denaturalisation, that is a move away from nature and towards an absolute option for the decision of the feelings of the human subject[30]." Beyond the taking of ideological positions, it is important that we find an appropriate way of talking about sexual identity and of interpreting God's plan for man and woman today.

3. Interpersonal and social relationships in a period of change

48. Interpersonal and social relationships are affected by:

a) Globalisation and interculturality: Globalisation accelerates cultural exchange and can promote open-mindedness. It enables different cultures to mutually enrich one another, but can also result in the erasing of cultural traditions. By becoming familiar with the values of our culture of origin and remaining attentive to the contemporary developments of global culture, we can both discover the roots of our identity and open ourselves up to dialogue with others.

b) Digital culture: The digital world and social media have developed communications, but not necessarily the quality of encounter. Communication through these media involves a new type of human relationship, one that offers new relational, intellectual, and missionary possibilities, but also requires corresponding wisdom and ethics. The way in which we relate to ourselves and to others is profoundly reshaped. For consecrated persons, the use of digital technology requires both a level of human maturity and its appropriate integration into our form of life.

30. On this subject, see the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education: *Male and Female He Created Them. Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, 2019; here, no. 19.

4. A new context for dialogue with others

49. Our capacity for dialogue with others is transformed by:

a) Relativism and the rejection of the notion of truth: Postmodernism has attempted to deconstruct clear cut notions and to distance itself from the optimism of the Age of the Enlightenment as regards the progress and capacities of the subject. A loss of confidence in the intellect, considered incapable of attaining truth, goes hand in hand with the relativisation of the very notion of truth. This attitude enables people to distance themselves from dogmatic positions that are too authoritarian and closed in on themselves. However, it also hinders authentic dialogue with reality itself by reducing truth to pure subjectivity. By deepening our understanding of the notion of truth, we will develop a more accurate perception of interdisciplinarity. It is important we each grasp that it is both possible to attain truth, of which God is the guarantor, and that the truth is discovered and expressed in a way that is "symphonic."

b) Widespread generalised re-questioning of everything and the development of irrational fears: The mass of information in circulation thanks to the new means of communication requires an increasingly vigilant discernment with respect to possible error and manipulation. A growing loss of confidence in the various channels of communication should not lead to fear and irrationality. In order to avoid groupthink and the polarisation of opinions we each need to be aware of the irrational fears we might be harbouring, accept that our understanding is only partial, and develop our capacity for appropriate critical dialogue without excessive naivety.

5. A changed relationship with the world and with society

50. The way in which we interact with the world and with society is challenged by:

a) Consumerism: Economic growth improves living standards and opens up new opportunities for development. The expansion of a consumerist mentality, however, promotes a culture that favours what is fragmented and provisional, as well as the unbridled exploitation of nature. It maintains the illusion that greater consumption leads to an increase in well-being and happiness. It falls to each of us, in light of the Gospel, to question our conception of a happy life and the authentic value of the goods that lead to it.

b) The ecological crisis: Our relationship to the world is deeply marked by the current question of ecology. It is clear today that man cannot dominate nature in defiance of its own rules and excessively exploit its resources. The current development of ecological awareness encourages us to care for creation and make the transition towards a more responsible and sober way of life.

c) The challenges of urban life: Thanks to the development of scientific and technical capabilities, contemporary urban living offers unprecedented opportunities for service and sharing in common. Along with this, however, can be observed a certain loss of good common sense, a distancing from nature, and the risk of greater isolation. We must all learn to put urban resources at the service of greater communion and maintain the capacity to appreciate simple joys.

d) A loss of confidence in institutions: The pitfalls of a centralised government and an individualistic ultra-liberalism give rise to the desire for solidarity, which often goes hand in hand with a loss of confidence in institutions. This tendency can reduce the temptation to conformism, but it can also lead to increasing disengagement from society. Feelings of structural inadequacy and injustice can lead to a healthy desire for reform, but can also generate a violent reaction that one needs to learn how to channel appropriately.

IV. POINTS OF EMPHASIS IN OUR FORMATION

51. Taking into account the different contexts mentioned above, the Ratio Formationis Congregationis will try to address a number of aspects of formation that require particular attention today[31].

1. Proposing formation that is integral

52. §1. We are aware that "formation is an absolutely fundamental element of [our] future" and that it "simultaneously concerns human, spiritual, religious, pastoral, and intellectual dimensions[32]."

§2. We must find an appropriate balance in formation between the spiritual dimension and the human dimension (*cf.* VN 14): formation must lead to healthy human maturity that supports every brother on his path to holiness. In accordance with our charism, an important place is given to the intellectual dimension of our integral formation. However, studies alone will not lead to an integral maturation of the person. Whilst special place must be given to this dimension, we must ensure it is integrated into our broader efforts for holiness and human growth. In line with the apostolic nature of our Institute, there is also an urgent need to bring out more clearly the missionary dimension of formation: our apostolic life must be prepared for and accompanied by sound formation.

§3. While teaching is appropriately incorporated into our formation in accordance with our charism, the theoretical dimension of formation must be supplemented by more concrete pedagogy that takes account of the practical dimension of our life and can accompany the integral growth of every brother[33]. We must avoid the risk of providing formation that is "more informative than performative", one that, "despite all of the effort and hard work put into formation, [...] does not seem to reach and truly transform the heart of people" (NW 12).

2. Emphasising freedom of conscience

53. The current context of the Church and of the Congregation highlights the need to cultivate freedom of conscience. In order for every brother to be the free subject of his own actions and commitments, the Congregation must provide formation that helps him to learn to listen to his conscience and promotes the exercise of Christian freedom. For brothers and authorities this entails a revision of the way in which we live out religious obedience. We must place real value on the free gift of self, without infantilisation or pressure[34].

---

31. The justification for choosing these orientations was given in detail in the *Report of the CRF at the Second Session of the General Chapter of 2022*.
32. *Message of the Second Session of the General Chapter of 2019*, 1 November 2019, "D. Formation".
33. *Cf. Acts 2019*, "Orientation votes for the Ratio Formationis Commission (RFC)", no. 3.
34. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Letter of 22 June 2016 to the Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John; Acts 2019*, "Message of the 2nd Session".

3. Instituting clear and practical formation on chastity

54. The sexual misconduct[35] committed within the Congregation has led us to undertake serious work on the practice of chastity in our different relationships[36]. Formation must include clear information on abuse, the possibility of being listened to, the legal, ecclesial, and community procedures that will be initiated, and an awareness of the relevant sanctions. Development of the virtue of chastity should not only enable a brother to assume the instinctual aspect of sexuality, but also its affective and relational dimension. Formation in proper and sound relationships is not only a corrective of past situations in the community, but a fundamental orientation of our human formation, and it entails a proper and sound integration of psychology.

4. Formation in accompaniment

55. §1. The General Chapter of 2019 reaffirmed our vocation to "accompany people in their human and spiritual growth and lead them to friendship with Christ", while emphasising the need for formation and supervision for those who exercise the ministry of spiritual accompaniment[37]. Many abuses committed in the Church and in the Congregation were committed within the context of spiritual accompaniment. This makes formation and continued vigilance all the more urgent in order to avoid any form of abuse of power or infantilisation.

§2. Many brothers have received spiritual accompaniment during their initial and ongoing formation that has been lacking in some or even all aspects. It is important that every brother of the Congregation receives sound and proper spiritual accompaniment and learns how to make use of this accompaniment for his religious and human growth. It is furthermore not possible to accompany someone without oneself benefiting from an authentic experience of accompaniment[38].

5. Supporting fraternal relationships and accompanying our communities

56. We are conscious of the strength of our vocation to a life of fraternal charity lived out in small priories. The preparation of the Ratio Formationis and the work of reforming the Congregation have presented an opportunity for many brothers to share their aspirations in the area of fraternal life[39]. Our community formation must enable us to live this fraternity in a concrete way. A brother's wellbeing depends to a large extent on the quality of the fraternal, religious, and apostolic atmosphere of the priory in which he lives, and so our communities must also be nurtured as a group. Integrating aspects of systemic psychology should contribute to the healthy growth of community life. In this sense, the General Chapter of 2022 asked "the provinces to put into place reflection on the way in which we take care of each other and ourselves", taking inspiration from the Ratio Formationis and the work undertaken by the COFASA from 2019-2022[40].

---

35. Translator's note: 'sexual misconduct' translates *les agressions sexuelles* and is the English term most commonly used in the workplace to denote "any conduct that is sexual, unwanted and causes distress, or that otherwise constitutes harassment, bullying or victimisation" (definition taken from the University of Southampton website: https://reportandsupport.southampton.ac.uk/support/what-is-sexual-misconduct, accessed 10.10.24). "Sexual misconduct is both a cause and a consequence of inequality and power differences" (Sexual Misconduct Policy for UK Parliament, Edition 2022, paragraph 1.5).
36. *Cf. Idem.*
37. *Cf. Acts 2019*, pp. 34-35. (*Cf.* CG 2019, III – Mission.)
38. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Letter of 22 June 2016, to the Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John; Acts 2019*, "Report of the SOS Abuse Commission to GC 2019".
39. *Cf. Report of the CRF to GC 2019*, "Synthesis of the consultation of vicariates on formation by the CRF (2018-2019)".
40. *Cf. Acts 2022*, votes "Present and Future". The COFASA was the Commission for formation in spiritual accompaniment and

6. Formation in collegial governance and a sense of the common good

57. The collegial character of our chapters implies a participative mode of government. Our ongoing formation must therefore include formation for all brothers in how to govern. It is important that brothers learn how to discern in community and how to work to establish the necessary conditions for responsible and collaborative engagement. In order to build community life, brothers must be strengthened in their search for the common good and receive an education that provides them with a sense of the political dimension of life[41].

7. Encouraging self-knowledge and the development of skills and proficiency

58. In recent years, many brothers have asked that a brother's gifts, talents, and cultural and personal needs are better taken into account within the pathways of formation and assignment[42]. Proper attention to the talents and the profile of a brother will allow for a fraternal exercise of religious authority that favours his personal growth as well as greater stability in mission and assignment. This requires brothers who exercise authority and those who provide formation to acquire the necessary skills in managing human resources. These skills must, of course, be rightly understood as an instrument at the service of the human formation of brothers, the sound governance of our priories and the Congregation, and the evangelical discernment of God's call for each of us.

8. Taking cultures into account

59. The General Chapter of 2019 asked that the Ratio Formationis put into place "a pedagogy that enables brothers in initial formation to integrate the enrichment of cultural difference and to develop an 'evangelical critical awareness' of their own culture[43]". Attention to culture is a major issue for our initial and ongoing formation. Culture presents a challenge for our self-knowledge, the rooting of our religious consecration, communion between brothers, studies, and mission. Every brother must be rooted in their cultural identity, be capable of witnessing to its strengths, and of surpassing its limits. As an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation, cultural awareness—both of our own culture and the culture of others—gives to our life and mission the spirit of the Gospel.

9. Taking into account the specific needs of lay brothers and deacons

60. §1. There are a substantial number of lay brothers in our Institute, and yet little clarification of their specific vocation has ever been made. This lack of clarity, which has been somewhat bolstered by an attitude of clericalism, has sometimes given rise to unequal treatment. It is therefore necessary that we better clarify the vocation of lay brothers in our Congregation and that their formation be adapted to their specific calling. As a synodal reflection on this subject has not yet been completed, this aspect could not be included in the current Ratio Formationis. As we await clarification, it is important for those who accompany lay brothers to be attentive to their specific needs in the area of formation.

---

affectivity.

41. In 2019, the GC asked the CRF "to consider the need for specific formation in taking up positions of authority" (Acts 2019, "Orientation votes for the Ratio Formationis Commission (RFC)", no. 11); *cf.* CICLSAL, *New Wine in New Wineskins*, no. 16. Consultation with the conventual chapters revealed the brothers' desire that formation in governance not be reserved to those in authority.
42. *Cf. Report of the CRF to GC 2019*, "Synthesis of the consultation of vicariates on formation by the CRF (2018-2019)".
43. *Acts 2019*, "Votes on the direction of the Commission for the Ratio Formationis (CRF)", no. 1.

§2. What was said above about lay brothers similarly applies to permanent deacons within our Congregation. The General Chapter of 2022 asked for "a reflection on the vocation, place and formation of deacon brothers and non-clerical brothers within the Congregation[44]".

10. Entering into and evangelising the digital world

61. Since the General Chapter of 2016, the Congregation has made sure it has a proactive presence in "the digital world[45]". Consecrated life is called to the "prophecy of the wise use of new technologies" (IMB 37). The fundamental challenge of the digital world is first found on the level of human and religious formation: balancing connectivity, keeping guard over the senses, and one's interior life; balancing obedience and individual initiatives; accompanying negative digital experiences (dependencies, addictions, lack of prudence and discernment, etc.). Within the field of apostolic formation, we must grasp the immense opportunity the digital world offers for proclaiming the Gospel to the peripheries and for new collaborative creativity. When used well, digital resources can be a valuable tool for our initial and permanent intellectual formation and for mission.

11. Working to find our place in, and to cooperate with, the Church

62. Following on from the General Chapter of 2019, which initiated reflection on the ecclesial dimension of our charism[46], we want to continue to work in synergy with the local Church and in communion with other ecclesial entities. This effort calls for constant renewal. It requires that we carry out “discernment of (...) the missions to which [we] are called, in trusting collaboration with the Pastors of the local Churches[47]", and that we establish open links of collaboration with the diocesan clergy, religious brothers and sisters from other communities, movements, and laypeople. We want to "increase exchange and cooperation with others within the intellectual domain, notably through our association with other institutes and in Catholic universities[48]."

12. Accompanying crises and encouraging perseverance

63. §1. Faced with the departure of many brothers in recent years, the Community must ask itself what led them to take the decision to leave and accept to question its own manner of going about things. The Church presents as a sign of hope "the progressive overcoming of a mentality that tended to place the blame on those who left consecrated life, denying any responsibility to the Institute" (GF 49).

§2. The Community must also encourage perseverance in one's vocation and improve the accompaniment it offers brothers in difficulty (provision of the necessary means of discernment; respect for conscience and freedom). It is important to set up "the ministry of discernment-accompaniment not only for those who are going through times of crisis, but also for those who, while persevering, wish to re-motivate the sense of their own fidelity" (GF 49). This ministry must competently and wisely put into place watchful prevention, which provides brothers with the means of facing the trying and sometimes dramatic situations they encounter. When confronted with these situations, we recommend that each brother seek, alongside others, to maintain a deep sense of God's love, filial trust in the Church, and openness to his calling.

---

44. *Acts 2022*, "Votes on the Ratio Formationis".
45. The General Chapter of 2019 took this further and asked the CRF "to think out a specific pedagogy for the new means of communication and social media" (*Acts 2019*, "Votes on the direction of the Commission Ratio Formationis (CRF)", no. 1).
46. *Acts 2019*, "Some of the elements of our charism", pp. 33-35.
47. Benedict XVI, Angelus (*Address to the Community of Saint John*), St Peter's Basilica, 15 February 2006.
48. *Acts 2019*, "Some of the elements of our charism", no. II.

SECTION TWO

General Remarks on Formation

Chapter 3
WHAT IS FORMATION?

64. §1. Before we set out the pathways of formation specific to our Congregation, it is worth specifying what is meant by the idea of formation, taking into account recent developments of the Church and the charism of our Institute[49]. Formation enables us to walk in the footsteps of Christ (I), actively work to transform our life (II), and put into place the means and strategies to achieve these objectives (III).

§2. This chapter does not have a juridical perspective but provides guidelines that put the recommendations presented in the rest of the Ratio into perspective.

I. THE JOURNEY OF A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

65. The formation of religious brothers, as with every baptised person, should enable them to become ever greater disciples of Christ. This can be summed up as: walking constantly in Christ's footsteps and allowing oneself to be increasingly configured to him (1); allowing oneself to be transformed in one's whole person (2); becoming a missionary by allowing oneself to be sent by the Master (3); entering into a community of disciples (4); following Christ and remaining faithful to him to the end (5). These common characteristics of the life of Christ's disciples take on a particular hue for us as a result of our consecration and the specific grace of our Institute.

1. The ongoing path of being configured to Christ

66. §1. The goal of formation is to make us disciples who follow the Lamb wherever he goes (*cf.* Rev 14:4). The path of formation is therefore first of all the path of a disciple of Christ who seeks to be taught by him (*cf.* Jn 7:16; 1 Jn 2:27), to confess him in faith (*cf.* Jn 6:68; 1 Jn 4:15), to abide in him (*cf.* Jn 15:4), to learn to recognise his voice (*cf.* Jn 10:4), to keep his word (*cf.* Jn 14:23) and his commandments (*cf.* Jn 15:10), and to let oneself be led by his Spirit (*cf.* 1 Jn 3:24).

§2. Becoming a disciple of Christ is both a spiritual and a pedagogical journey. It is therefore essential that each of us "should always feel that he is a disciple on a journey, constantly needing an integrated formation, understood as a continuous configuration to Christ[50]." "He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked" (1 Jn 2:6).

§3. The commitment of someone in religious life to follow Christ "is not only a matter of following Christ with one's whole heart, of loving him 'more than father or mother, more than son or daughter' (*cf.* Mt 10:37)—for this is required of every disciple—but of living and expressing this by conforming one's whole existence to Christ" (*cf.* VC 16). We aspire to take on the sentiments and way of life of Christ chaste, poor, and obedient (*cf.* VC 18).

---

49. The Church has profoundly evolved over several decades in the way it views the nature and means of formation. Pastores Dabo Vobis (1992 – for priestly life) and *Vita Consecrata* (1996 – for consecrated life) are essential reference points on formation. Although primarily intended for priests—including religious priests—the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* published in 2016 by the Congregation for the Clergy presents new general ways of understanding formation that are valid for all consecrated persons and complement the directives promulgated by the CICLSAL in Potissimum Institutioni (1990)—which remains the primary reference for the formation of religious. These four documents are of such importance that every brother should have read them in full at least once in his life.

50. RFIS, Introduction.

§4. This path of configuration calls for constant formation. That is what the recent magisterium of the Church means when it affirms that formation is not only "a teaching period in preparation for vows but also represents a theological way of thinking of consecrated life" (SAFC 15). This must be understood as "a never ending formation" (SAFC 15). The very idea of formation sums up the profound dynamism of the evangelical counsels and touches on the very essence of the sequela Christi.

2. A journey that aligns with and unites all the aspects of our vocation

67. §1. Ongoing formation "should involve the whole person, in every aspect of the personality, in behaviour and intentions" (VC 65). It thus commits us to work on ourselves in every area of our life: human, spiritual, intellectual, religious, community, and missionary.

§2. Although distinct, these different orientations are complimentary. "The entire journey of formation must never be reduced to a single aspect to the detriment of others[51]". These different dimensions come together in a unique dynamic of growth which should lead to unity of life (*cf.* PC 18).

§3. The charism of our Institute articulates in an original way the different dimensions of our formation and accentuates the unification of the dimensions of our life:

- The spiritual experience that underlies the writings of St John and the vision of the Christian life that animates the theology of St Thomas Aquinas provide inspiration and powerful unity to our formation; they inspire our understanding of the apostolic life and of the vows, give dynamism to our search for truth, and orient our human formation.
- Intellectual formation—which has a very important place in our community and gives substantial space to philosophy—contributes to our human maturation, opens up our apostolic horizons, enriches our community life, and stimulates our thirst to know and to love God.
- Life in common is received as a spiritual gift to be shared in our apostolic witness. It is based especially on silent prayer in common, the Liturgy of the Hours celebrated in choir, and the Eucharist. The common search for truth is also an essential dimension.
- "The desire to be of service to the Church's mission inhabits the other dimensions of our life" (GC 2019).

3. A missionary apprenticeship

68. §1. "The disciple is the one whom the Lord has called to "stay with Him" (*cf.* Mk 3:14), to follow Him, and to become a missionary of the Gospel[52]." Formation is therefore of its nature missionary. It must enable us to participate in the prophetic priesthood of Christ and to take our part with him for the salvation of mankind by serving the evangelical mission of the Church. As apostolic religious, our sequala Christi leads us to bear witness, to offer service, and to evangelise.

§2. Mission is not limited to activity but encompasses the whole of our life. "Indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life" (VC 72).

§3. The Church becomes who she really is when she reaches out to others; we must therefore come out of ourselves and reach out to people where they are, even to the existential peripheries. Formation bears fruit when we all become shepherds who "take on the 'smell of the sheep'" (EG 24) by sharing in the compassion of the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd.

51. *Cf. Idem.*
52. *Ibid.*, no. 61.

4. An ecclesial experience

69. §1. By walking after Christ, we are immediately introduced into the community of disciples who follow him. "Formation has an eminently communitarian character" and cannot be accomplished "in an individualistic manner[53]". It must therefore develop in us an awareness that "one belongs to a people on a journey" and give us a sense of the Church (*cf.* PI 24).

§2. In a spirit of communion, we receive from the Church and its shepherds the fundamental orientations for formation (*cf.* PI 23) and experience the "sharing of gifts" with other religious and different members of the Church.

§3. The Church is the true milieu of our formation. It is in her that we experience the paschal mystery and receive the word of God; it is she who shapes us through the liturgy and the sacraments; it is again she who guarantees the authenticity of our docility to the work of the Paraclete; lastly, it is she who sends us on mission.

5. A programme of creative fidelity

70. §1. Religious formation "means following a singular 'journey of discipleship', which begins at Baptism, is perfected through the other sacraments of Christian Initiation, comes to be appreciated as the centre of one's life at the beginning of [religious life], and continues through the whole of life[54]" until one's definitive encounter with Christ, when "we will see him as he is" (1 Jn 3: 2)[55].

§2. Formation involves a long apprenticeship in listening to the Spirit. It is the Spirit who is the primary agent of our growth. He works on our hearts by reminding us of Christ's words, denouncing the sinfulness of the world, and leading us to conversion; he grafts us onto the Vine, making us remain in Christ and bear fruit in the Church. Given at the Cross for the Church, the Spirit enables us to live the Paschal Mystery; it centres us on Christ, the true focus of our existence, and thus leads us to the heart of our formation.

§3. The desire to fulfil God's will and respond to the calls of the Spirit challenges us to regularly adjust and constantly reform our way of life. Our formation takes the form of a journey of creative fidelity. We need to learn to find appropriate ways, with God's help, to make something new out of the old and to persevere day after day, according to the spirit of our charism, in our consecration, fraternity, and mission.

II. A PATH OF TRANSFORMATION

71 Formation contributes to the metamorphosis within us from the old self to the new[56]. The work of ongoing formation enables us to accomplish a journey of paschal transformation in union with the dead and risen Christ. By welcoming the daily grace of Christ and agreeing to work on ourselves in truth, we experience a new birth in faith. By asking for help (4) to move from an ideal to reality (1), and by working to integrate the many elements of our lives into what lies at its heart—the Paschal Mystery of Christ (2)—we can discover the path of an authentic gift of ourselves (3).

---

53. *Cf.* RFIS, Introduction.
54. *Cf.* RFIS, Introduction, no. 3.
55. The major periods of ongoing formation, its periods of joy and of crisis, are presented in Chapter 13.
56. This section draws heavily and freely from the analyses of Amedeo Cencini, especially his two books: *Éduquer, former, accompagner* (2004) and *The Sentiments of the Son* (Pauline Publications, 2005) [*Les sentiments du Fils* (1998)].

1. Passing from an ideal to reality

72. §1. As with the Samaritan woman, encountering Christ leads us on an inner journey. Jesus enters into conversation with us, sheds light on our personal history, and frees us from the weight of our mistakes in order to awaken the most authentic desires of our hearts.

§2. This journey involves a slow process of uncovering the deepest desires that God has placed within us. It involves recognising the riches and fruits of grace by discovering ourselves as new creatures, but also facing up to the darkness, fragility and anguish in us, so that we can learn to be ourselves and stand in truth before God.

§3. Confronting our weaknesses and inconsistencies can be just as demanding as recognising our gifts. But both are absolutely necessary if we are to move from an idealised conception of ourselves to true self-knowledge. This involves a genuine search for the truth about ourselves. Without this work, the effects of formation may be manifest in our behaviour for a while but will not penetrate our deepest motivations.

§4. This path of descent and ascent is a journey of faith; God loves us in all that we are, despite our weaknesses, sins, and mistakes. The result is self-knowledge that is both human—involving psychological aspects and dynamics—and genuinely spiritual—enabling us to re-read our lives as a sacred history.

2. A path of integration and unification

73. §1. As we become aware of our deepest identity and embrace the truth of who we are, we open ourselves up to the varied content of our formation and are able to enter into the dynamic of ongoing formation. The work of unifying the person can begin when we discover the centre from which everything in our lives takes on meaning. For us, this work revolves around Christ who died and rose again, the only one who can reveal the true meaning of events; it is around this centre that everything finds its rightful place. We then discover the thread that connects and illuminates all the events of our history, the thread that will guide all the events and things we learn in our lives from now on.

§2. We must integrate the many aspects of our lives that we sometimes experience in juxtaposed or conflicting ways—the past, the future, our relational and spiritual experiences, our sins, works of grace, our emotions, etc.—by setting them in their proper place. This involves multiple inner steps: completing, perfecting, collecting, correcting, but also enlightening, giving meaning, letting go, welcoming, invigorating, healing wounds, and so on. It is a process in which we take on board a wide variety of elements which enables us to make our own the way of life of the Brothers of Saint John in all its dimensions, and to cultivate our vocation so that it can bear fruit.

§3. This work leads us to discover the fundamental inconsistencies and misunderstandings that distort our understanding of God, ourselves, others, happiness, and holiness. These inconsistencies and misunderstandings absorb our energy and orient it in the wrong direction, causing us to become fragmented. Coherence, on the other hand, is a force for unity, enabling all our energies to be focused on the same pathway.

§4. Ongoing formation requires constant vigilance in order to die to the inclinations of sin and be reborn to a holier life. Spiritual combat is an inescapable part of the journey of Christ's disciples. This combat is also one of discernment, enabling us, in the light of Christ's friendship towards us, to let ourselves be stripped of anything which leads us to death, deceit, or blindness. By facing up to this struggle, we can take full advantage of the dynamics and content of the formation offered us.

3. A journey of self-giving

74. §1. Thanks to a life anchored in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, we discover a new freedom. The different areas of our life are brought into unity in a personal synthesis. The work of integration and unification intensifies our capacity to give of ourselves. Our offering to God "[is made] more genuinely and with greater generosity; it extends to others with greater serenity and wisdom, as well as with greater simplicity and richness of grace" (VC 70).

§2. The gift of self is a path we travel every day in accordance with the itinerary described in this Ratio. In every area and through every event of our lives we seek to make progress in our listening to the Holy Spirit and our obedience to God within our Institute. Our formation then effectively becomes a configuration to Christ "in his total self-giving" (VC 65).

4. A journey to be made with companions

75. §1. The benevolent gaze and respectful listening ear of another person are indispensable means for the emergence of the human person, the child of God, and the consecrated person. It is neither possible nor desirable to remain alone on the path of formation. Accompaniment, whether institutional or fraternal[57], helps us, if we so desire, to identify the inner movements of our heart and to discern the life of God in us.

§2. To enter into a relationship of accompaniment is to humbly accept the help of another person in order to gain access to parts of ourselves of which we are less aware, to aspects of reality that we cannot see on our own, to the unnoticed resonances of the word of God in our hearts, to the life that the Holy Spirit unfolds within us. This requires a willingness to open up to the one who accompanies us, to trust them, to discern with their support, and to walk with them. Being accompanied requires us to enter into the process and learn how to participate.

III. A PROGRAMME OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PEDAGOGY

76. To support the inner journey of formation, it is important to put into place strategies, tools, and methods that enable us to bring about a real interior transformation and to follow Christ effectively in our daily lives. Formation must adopt concrete and accessible pathways (1), which enable every brother to become more fully themselves before the Lord and their brothers (2), and which enables the local community to grow as it brings us together and supports us (3).

5. A concrete path of formation

77. §1. In order to achieve its objective, ongoing formation needs to be embodied in “concrete forms, for individuals and communities” (NW 35). This Ratio Congregationis defines the framework of these forms of ongoing and initial formation. They should be completed at all levels (individual, priory, province, congregation) as circumstances and needs dictate. Even beyond its initial period, formation always entails an aspect that is pedagogical.

§2. In order to promote a "culture of permanent formation" (VN 16), the Community must encourage the sharing of resources and with benevolence guide the discernment of every brother in the area of ongoing formation.

57. On the different forms of accompaniment, see Chapter 4.

6. A personalised and “personalising” formation

78. The means we use for formation must be adapted to each brother and enable him to develop integral maturity. Each brother must seek to enter into the pedagogy proposed by the community; the community must in turn seek to respect the individuality of each brother by adapting its rhythm to his needs and striving to provide means appropriate to his formation. The pedagogy of ongoing formation must awaken the brothers' freedom, develop his capacities, and enable him to attain integral maturity.

IV. A path of growth for the community

79. In addition to accompanying each brother individually on his journey, the pedagogy put in place by the Congregation should allow for the growth of its communities. Indeed, the human and spiritual health of each brother is linked to the health of the community in which he lives. "This means that a community will be what its members make it, that it has its own requirements, and that before it can be used as a means of formation, it deserves to be lived and loved for what it is in the religious life" (PI 26). The transforming power of the Gospel is particularly effective when the community climate fosters "a fraternal life where individuals make themselves available to their brothers or sisters, and where the "group" enhances the individual" (FLC 42).

Chapter 4
KEY PEOPLE IN FORMATION

80. This chapter presents the different people who play a role in formation, their specific responsibilities, and how they interact with others. It prescribes their responsibility in the process of ongoing formation and therefore contains aspects that are binding for those concerned.

I. THE TRINITY: PRIMARY AGENT OF FORMATION

81. **§1.** Formation is the work in us of the whole Trinity. "God the Father, through the unceasing gift of Christ and the Spirit, is the educator par excellence of those who consecrate themselves to him" (VC 66). The gift of our vocation, the sacraments we live in the Church, the word of God, life in community, and even the trials we experience in life are all ways in which the Father is "working" in our life and our formation (Jn 5:17).

§2. It is God's plan to make us his sons in the Son and to lead us to life (*cf.* Jn 1:12; 10:10; 20:31). The Word reveals the Father to us (*cf.* Jn 14:9) and is the pattern of our relationship with God. He gives us the example of a life totally given to God and opens to us the way of obedience through his death and resurrection.

§3. "The Spirit, whose action is of another order than the findings of psychology or visible history, but who also works through them, acts with great secrecy in the heart of each one of us so as later to be made manifest in fruits that are clearly visible: The Spirit is the Truth who 'teaches,' 'reminds,' and 'guides' (*cf.* Jn 14:26; 16:12). He is the Anointing giving desire, appreciation, judgment, choice (*cf.* 1 Jn 2:20-27). The Spirit is the consoling advocate who 'comes to assist us in our weakness,' sustains us, and gives us a filial spirit (*cf.* Rom 8:15-26)" (PI 19).

I. THE BROTHER AS THE PRIMARY PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS FORMATION

82. Every brother "himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation (...). No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons" (PDV 69). We exercise this fundamental freedom by actively assuming the role of "subject" of our formation and by being the driving force behind our ongoing formation. We each engage with this process through four principal aspects: a desire to learn and to grow every day (1); maintaining useful dialogue with the various interlocutors of our formation (2); defining for oneself concrete frameworks and objectives for growth (3); perseverance on the journey (4).

1. Openness to formation

83. The first responsibility we have in our formation is to become people who are "readily open" to formation, allowing the events of our life to form us, seeking the will of God in every situation and

every person we meet, ready to be scrutinised and challenged by life itself, no matter our stage of life. Docibilitas is the virtue that teaches us this ready openness to being shaped by the life of the Spirit in us.

2. Entering into dialogue with those who partner us in our formation

84. Even though every brother is the primary person responsible for his formation, no one forms themselves by themselves. The path of our consecration is travelled with numerous fellow travellers who partner us in our formation. It is up to us to enter into dialogue with these people so that we might journey forward with them:

a) Those who provide accompaniment: Whatever their level of accompaniment (prior, spiritual accompaniment, formation, etc.), it is up to us to take advantage of the partnership they offer us. This involves opening up, building mutual trust, discerning with the person offering accompaniment, and walking together with Christ. The specific role of the main people who accompany us is described in this chapter. The Community plays a role in the quality of accompaniment by fostering a climate of truth and mutual trust, promoting suitable respect for confidentiality, and building a culture of openness, chastity, mutual respect, and listening. The fact that every brother can easily access spiritual accompaniment from outside the Community or medical or psychological help when he feels he needs it is a sign of good community health.

b) Professionals: as well as seeing doctors for our physical health, it is sometimes appropriate to call on professionals to support our psychological health or to help us work on our behaviour (psychologists, coaches, therapists, etc.). It is down to the individual brother to discern whether this is appropriate for him, whilst remaining open to what the brothers with whom he lives and the people he trusts have to say on the matter. Such accompaniment will be all the more fruitful if the brother is able to integrate its contributions into his overall programme of formation. It will be helpful if the houses of initial formation and the apostolic priories have a list of relevant competent people at their disposal: doctors, therapists, coaches, etc.

c) Our family of origin: It is usually our family of origin who set us off on our path of human growth and oftentimes play a key role in our Christian initiation. Aware of both the richness and the limitations of this first education, we want to both acknowledge and bring what has been given to bear fruit and at the same time address any aspects that need completing or purifying. This requires each of us to re-read our own history, which often takes courage and sometimes brings us face to face with deep-rooted wounds or deviations.

d) The world and the culture: God dwells in the heart of every person who seeks the truth and, in some way, inspires every culture. Every person and every culture can therefore become instruments of God for our formation. We were born into this world and bear both it's riches and it's questions, and it is to this world that the Church sends us on mission. Our ties to the world and our culture need to be constantly purified in the light of the Gospel; they require our constant discernment to distinguish their values and counter-values. In order to remain faithful to our vocation, we must take on the responsibility of distancing ourselves from the mentalities and ideologies of the world that would progressively distance us from our consecrated way of life and compromise its credibility.

e) People who influence our lives: As we journey through life, we meet many people who offer us witness or advice, and we often see them as moral authorities: people we meet in our apostolic work, those who provide our formation, friends, major witnesses, writers, preachers, Churchmen, etc. We are each personally responsible for discerning the soundness of what these people offer and the extent to which we should rely on them, and then of benefiting from them for our human, religious, and spiritual growth.

3. Defining concrete frameworks and objectives of formation

85. §1. In order to guarantee our own progress in formation, each of us is responsible for putting in place a real discipline of life that enables us to act in accordance with our Constitutions and to strive for coherence in our way of life.

§2. Every perpetually professed brother is invited, in conjunction with the Director Provincial of Formation, to establish a personal programme of formation. This will aim to meet his personal needs (life balance, renewal of his consecrated life, a deepening of various other aspects) and community needs (apostolic missions, responsibilities in the priory, etc.). The Director Provincial of Formation should introduce a personal formation booklet that will assist brothers by providing an overview of formation already received, qualifications acquired, skills developed, and plans for future formation, etc.

4. Persevering in one's vocation

86. Without prejudice to freedom of conscience, we make every effort to persevere in the Community, aware that "personal fidelity to remain in a particular Institute, while admitting exceptions, is not only a human question but it refers to the most profound choice of fidelity to God" (GF 33).

III. FRATERNAL ACCOMPANIMENT

87. §1. Fraternity plays a fundamental role in our ongoing formation. We count on each other and rely on the support of our brothers to help us grow, whatever the joys or trials we encounter. It is first and foremost among brothers that we find accompaniment, mutual support, and assistance. Fraternity then becomes "the place of eminent continuous formation" (NW 36).

§2. Fraternal accompaniment takes different forms: fraternal companionship, asking for advice, speaking with elders, discussions in conventual chapter, mentorship as we go through new experiences (placements, first assignment to a priory and first apostolic mission, first years of ordination, first years in a new culture, etc.).

§3. Fraternal accompaniment proves itself invaluable when a brother finds himself in a challenging situation: some form of crisis, a difficult transition (assignment to a priory, a change of mission).

§4. Our fraternity extends in a special way to all the members of the Family of Saint John. Sharing a common vocation, fraternal life, and sometimes a common mission with the Congregations of the Apostolic Sisters and the Contemplative Sisters of Saint John plays an important role in our formation. Our relationship with the Oblates also enriches the perception we have of our common vocation and our experience of fraternal communion.

IV. THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT OF FORMATION: THE PRIORY

1. The priory as a "formative community"

88. §1. Community life is one of the strengths of our pathway of formation. It "enjoys a privileged role in formation at every stage. Formation depends to a great extent on the quality of this community. This quality is the result of its general climate and the style of life of its members, in conformity with the particular character and spirit of the institute" (PI 26). The local community of the priory plays an important formative role by establishing "an atmosphere that fosters and ensures a process of formation" (PDV 42).

§2. Not every community is automatically a formative community. Certain conditions are required, including mutual respect and a genuine spirit of conversion and fidelity. This presupposes that our priories are places where we take "care" of one another, especially the weaker among us. We do this by being genuinely attentive to one another, by offering a non-judgmental listening ear, and by making the priory a "home" for each of the brothers (*cf.* GF 59; PC 15). The depth of the human and spiritual maturity of the brothers can give rise to a context that is in itself a source of accompaniment.

§3. Our communities are also formative when the conventual chapter defines the framework that gives each brother their place within the community and specifies the community rules. This guarantees clarity in community life and the soundness of its internal relations. The implementation of this framework entails a commitment on the part of every brother of the priory.

2. Community growth

89. §1. The good health of a priory is an essential condition for it to be an environment conducive to the growth of each of its members. Every group is a system of living relations, which, like a unique person, has its own history and its own stages of growth. Every priory must be able to integrate crises and conflicts—which it inevitably encounters—as ways for the community to grow. Crises and conflicts are necessary if the "system" is to remain alive. A community is transformed by facing its crises and conflicts; when these fail to be resolved, it is a sign that the group is not in good health.

§2. The way in which the prior exercises authority has a strong impact on the community; but the priory also has the ability to prevent a prior from exercising his authority properly. It is therefore important for the good health of a priory that the relationship between the community and the prior reaches a point of balance in which everyone engages in dialogue, is prepared to make necessary concessions, seeks the common good, and contributes to a healthy exercise of collegiality and subsidiarity.

§3. A community that is able to formalise the way it functions, undertake a lucid critique of its objectives, procedures, and results, and embrace these findings in a spirit of thanksgiving, as well as to accept external critique, reaches a level of maturity that fosters the healthy functioning of conventual life and the personal élan of every brother. To this end, the conventual chapter will evaluate the different dimensions of community and apostolic life at least once a year. In order to celebrate the marvels that have been accomplished (in the Biblical sense) and understand the (sometimes significant) influences of the past, our priories must be clear about their own history (foundations, first missions, significant events, people who played an important role in the history of the priory, etc.) and keep a record for future brothers.

§4. The chapter of a priory can have its blind spots, which makes regular external accompaniment necessary. First of all, regular accompaniment is provided by the Prior Provincial. The chapter may also call upon an ecclesial, medical, or psychological authority, the intervention of a professional or other person whose expertise could prove necessary in order to improve cooperation in a pastoral

task, to improve the functioning of the conventual chapter, or to take a step back from the lived experience of the community (to review fraternal relations, community balance, the priory's general everyday programme, etc.). The speaker's opinion will be given due weight, and an appropriate way will be found to integrate it into the discernment of the conventual chapter.

3. Community engagement in formation

90. Every conventual chapter has a responsibility it must take up for the formation of the local community. Thus, within the framework given by the Ratio Formationis Congregationis and the Ratio Provincialis, and taking into account the complimentary formation programmes established by the Province and the Congregation, the conventual chapter must establish a formation programme specific to the priory. This programme (of one year or more) must enable the priory to engage in a particular direction and with means that correspond to its specific mission, to the needs of the priory, and to the aspirations of the brothers. At a minimum, it should define the objective and organisation of community intellectual work.

V. THE ROLE OF AUTHORITIES

1. The role of the prior

91. **§1.** The prior, who is the ordinary authority for the external forum and to whom we ordinarily exercise religious obedience, is a privileged partner on our journey of growth: he keeps us listening to the Lord by witnessing to an authority that does not come from ourselves; he facilitates ongoing formation in community life and has the duty to ensure that the community respects the Constitutions and its internal rules.

§2. The prior, for his part, tries to ensure that every brother experiences a normal pattern of growth in each period or phase of his life. The accompaniment offered by the prior is an extension of fraternal accompaniment. He considers everyone in a positive light and offers them his esteem, nourishing sincere affection toward them, making himself available to them, being discrete with anything told him in confidence, motivating courage and hope when brothers face trials, and sharing the concerns and difficulties of the brothers under his charge. He offers his assistance in solving problems or overcoming crises that might arise. The brothers' ongoing formation should be one of the priorities of his office (*cf.* SAO 13).

§3. Through his governance, the prior seeks to establish a community climate favourable to formation:

- He works with the chapter in the convent to keep both the charism of the Community and the sentire cum Ecclesia alive and active.
- He plays an active role in animating the life of the priory in all its dimensions and "seeks to maintain balance among the various aspects of community life – between prayer and work, apostolate and formation, work and rest" (FLC 50).
- He fosters a community climate in which every brother can feel "the freedom of letting oneself be formed by others and for each one to feel a responsibility for the growth of the others" (SAO 13).

- He is "concerned to create a climate favourable to sharing and co-responsibility; (...) to encourage members to assume and to respect responsibility (FLC 50).
- He ensures community spiritual discernment is undertaken in the most favourable conditions and that decisions taken do not come to naught.

2. The role of the Prior Provincial

92. §1. The Prior Provincial exercises his ministry in the name of the Church and within the framework provided by the law of the Congregation. He sees to the good health of the priories and helps them to fit in with the broader mission of the Church and the Province. He will get to know every brother under his care so that he might exercise his ministry of governing and assigning brothers in the most fitting way possible. He will accompany every brother at their own level and he will be someone benevolent whom brothers can approach in difficulty. When crises arise in the priory, he can take on the role of mediator.

§2. The visit of the Prior Provincial plays an important role in the growth of the local community. The conventual chapter must therefore be involved in preparations for his visit by preparing to welcome an outside view of the priory, discerning the important questions to be addressed, and preparing a review of what the community is going through in an attitude of thanksgiving and conversion. While fully exercising his ministry of accompaniment, the Prior Provincial will make sure he respects the autonomy proper to the conventional chapter. During his visit, he will make himself available to listen to each brother in order to assess the situation with him.

§3. The Prior Provincial will ensure he is familiar with the religious and apostolic path of every brother (assignment to priories, formation received, apostolic engagement, significant events in his life, etc.). His accompaniment must enable him not only to react to crises that arise, but also to ensure brothers receive long-term support. He will take the important decisions concerning plans for personal formation which go beyond the vision of a simple priory.

§4. The Prior Provincial is the primary guarantor of formation in the province. He supervises and accompanies the work of the Director Provincial of Formation. He is himself helped and supervised in his task by the Prior General and the Director General of Formation[58].

§5. Brothers will be mindful that over and above the qualities or defects of the person himself, the main superior represents the Church and provides healthy external regulation, which prevents us from becoming too self-referential.

3. The roles of the Director Provincial of Formation and the Director General of Formation

93. §1. In order to respond to the current needs of the brothers of the Congregation, to the requests of the universal Church, or to a particular situation that requires the work of the whole Congregation over the course of one or more years, the Director General of Formation and his counsel are responsible for completing the pedagogy of the Ratio Formationis Congregationis by proposing itineries of formation for the Congregation as a whole.

§2. The role of the Provincial Director of Formation is to organise and facilitate ongoing formation, ensure the Ratio Formationis Provincialis is implemented in his province, and implement formation programmes that respond to particular needs. It is his responsibility to ensure local programmes in the houses of formation are developed, implemented, and revised, support formation teams in their mission, ensure formators receive formation and supervision, and prepare their replacement.

58. On the formation of the Prior Provincial, see Chapter 11, no. 287.

§3. The Director Provincial of Formation and his counsel have the responsibility in their province of setting up formation courses on points not covered by the Ratio Formationis Provincialis, when the need arises. This comes under his role of facilitating formation in the province.

4. The Prior General

94. The Prior General is the ultimate guarantor of formation in the Community. In close cooperation with the Director General of Formation, he ensures the necessary frameworks are established for the Congregation as a whole so that in the provinces and priories every brother is able to live out his vocation in a spirit of genuine availability to God. He supports the faithfulness of the whole Congregation to its charism. The Prior General is the person who promulgates the Ratio Formationis Congregationis and approves the Rationes Provincialis.

VI. SPIRITUAL AND SACRAMENTAL ACCOMPANIMENT

1. Spiritual accompaniment

95. §1. Each brother must ensure that he is accompanied by someone who can help him to verify the way in which he listens to God in His word, in the encounters he has with others, and in the events of his life; they will help him to adjust the way he lives so that it is consistent with his state of life as a consecrated person and with the path of holiness that corresponds to our calling in the Community; they will help him to respond to the calls of the Lord, to remain obedient to the Church, and to freely stay the course of his mission[59].

§2. Spiritual accompaniment takes various and complimentary forms according to the period of a brother's life. Dialogue with other brothers, the prior, in conventual chapter, with a confessor, or with a confidant can play a major role in accompaniment. It is nevertheless highly beneficial and recommended that brothers choose a specific person for spiritual accompaniment so as to avoid the pitfall of contradictory advice. Whatever the form of accompaniment, brothers must be on guard against the danger of being self-referential. When it is difficult to meet up with an accompanier, it is recommended the brother find an easier means of accessing provision or to change accompanier.

§3. The accompanier—whether a man or woman—witnesses the work of grace taking place in the heart of the brother they are accompanying. Their mission is to help the brother to give a central place to the Lord and to discern his paths, to find the words to express himself and to grow in his awareness of events both past and present, to be responsible for his spiritual life, and to be consistent in his choices. The accompanier must be a presence in the brother's life who is competent, well-adjusted, available, benevolent, and encouraging in their judgments. They must respect the brother's freedom to choose whether to confide in them and keep what is confided to them confidential. They must also be attentive to their own inner self, of what is, and what is not, healthy for them to hear, and to make sure they do not become overwhelmed.

§4. It is legitimate for the prior or main superior to ask a brother whether he is receiving spiritual accompaniment.

---

59. For the way in which we can actively benefit in our spiritual life from our spiritual accompanier, see Chapter 7, no. 159; for the role of a spiritual accompanier in initial formation, see Chapter 6, no. 119.

2. The confessor

96. §1. It is highly recommended that a brother has a regular confessor who knows him and can offer him personalised advice in the celebration of the sacrament.

§2. To ensure the internal and external forum are respected and to allow for greater confidentiality, it is advisable that a brother confesses outside of his priory community.

VII. THE CHURCH

1. The Church's Accompaniment

97. §1. The Church authenticates the charism of the Community and accompanies its growth. "[E]ach religious institute depends for the authentic discernment of its founding charism on the God-given ministry of the hierarchy. This relationship obtains not only for the first recognition of a religious institute but also for its ongoing development. The Church does more than bring an institute into being. She accompanies, guides, corrects, and encourages it in its fidelity to its founding gift for it is a living element in her own life and growth[60]."

§2. The Church sets the general norms and guidelines for the formation of religious. The Congregation must ensure that its own guidelines conform to the instructions of the Church, both on a universal and local level.

2. Ecclesial communion and the sharing of gifts

98. §1. Many members of the Church (religious, diocesan priests, laypeople) can play an essential role in our formation by their listening ear, support, and advice. Our formation is enriched by this "sharing of gifts," which enables us to have a concrete experience of ecclesial communion. We are also shaped by the personal encounters and moments of cooperation with other workers in the Lord's vineyard.

§2. We benefit from structures and possibilities of formation offered to religious or pastoral workers by dioceses, bishops' conferences, and national conferences of religious. Cooperation with other institutes in the area of formation is a richness encouraged by the Church.

VIII. THE VIRGIN MARY AND THE SAINTS

99. §1. From the beginning to the end of our journey of formation, we walk in the presence of the Virgin Mary, our Mother and model (*cf.* PI 20). Mary "shares with [each brother] the love which enables them to offer their lives every day for Christ and to cooperate with him in the salvation of the world. Hence a filial relationship to Mary is the royal road to fidelity to one's vocation and a most effective help for advancing in that vocation and living it fully" (VC 28).

60. CICLSAL – *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life*, 1983, nos 41-42.

§2. In her mystery of compassion, Mary is the model of our participation as baptised and consecrated Christians in the priesthood of Christ. She is the one who teaches us to stand close to the Cross of her Son and close to the suffering of every person to whom we are sent. From her we learn to persevere in prayer, with the whole Church and for the whole Church (Acts 1:14), begging Jesus to send upon the Church the Spirit-Paraclete. Mary then becomes for us, as is spoken in the liturgy, "mother and teacher of the spiritual life[61]".

§3. The saints support our formation by their example and their intercession; we seek to make them companions on our journey. We do not hesitate to have recourse to the saints who inspire the spirit of our Congregation and to those who come into our lives in one way or another.

61. *Cf.* Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Volume I, Missal, "The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother and Teacher in the Spirit" (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 2012), p. 244.

SECTION THREE

Specific Aspects of Initial Formation

Chapter 5
SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR INITIAL FORMATION

100. §1. Ensuring the quality of the journey of formation that each candidate must undertake in order to become a Brother of Saint John is one of the most important responsibilities incumbent upon our Community. Indeed, we wish to give those who want to join us the best of who we are, what we believe, what we want to live together, and what we bring to the Church through our charism. We entrust this task, which exceeds our own capacities, to the Lord, and want each of our brothers in initial formation to become fully and actively engaged.

§2. Initial formation is the first stage of ongoing formation within the Congregation. Mutatis mutandis, everything said above about ongoing formation also applies to the years of initiation.

I. OBJECTIVES FOR A BROTHERS' GROWTH IN INITIAL FORMATION

1. Discovering the vocation of a Brother of Saint John.

101. The Community offers a formation pathway that, first and foremost, enables every candidate to grasp what the particular vocation of a Brother of Saint John is and to make it his own. To that end, candidates will be given the opportunity to experience our life in all its dimensions, to be accompanied by qualified formators who will help them to live our charism in a personalised way, and to know the particular history of our community and become a part of it.

2. Establishing the fundamentals of consecrated life

102. §1. During the initial years of formation each brother is called to lay the foundations that will enable him to lead a consecrated life and remain faithful to it. In this way, he will gradually build human, Christian, and religious maturity that can be strengthened throughout his life.

§2. This involves a personal experience of Christ and establishing the roots of a life lived in faith, hope, and charity; it is the development of the first love to which he will be able to return throughout his life (*cf.* Rev 2:4).

§3. He must equally lay down the human foundations for a lifelong commitment, which involves developing his human and Christian conscience, acquiring the fundamental virtues, and cultivating his freedom.

§4. The years of initial formation are also an opportunity to acquire the fundamental reflexes of consecrated life: every brother in initial formation must be able to experience the way in which the vows transform his way of life and set the tone for all his activities; he must discover how his consecration relates to all the other dimensions of our life: prayer, study, community life, and apostolate.

3. Setting out on the path of ongoing formation

103. As the starting point of his ongoing formation, the years of initiation should enable a brother to learn to develop an attitude of constant openness to Christ and the Holy Spirit. The formation programme and the pedagogy used "must render [him] truly docibilis" (NW 35), that is, capable of learning and of being taught. He will thus acquire a disposition that will support his entire journey of consecrated life from his perpetual profession to the moment of his ultimate meeting with God.

4. Taking the path of discernment

104. The time of initial formation is a time of vocational discernment in preparation for perpetual profession. Each candidate participates in this discernment by cultivating his freedom through an attentive listening to the Holy Spirit and the interior movements of his heart. The formators guide the brother on his path by forming him in spiritual discernment, regularly evaluating his commitment to us, and accompanying him through the stages of his vocational discernment.

II. DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE PEDAGOGY

1. Providing education for responsible adults

105. §1. From the very beginning of the journey of a brother's initiation, formators must take seriously the fact that God is the primary agent of formation and the candidate the primary person responsible for it. The candidate is an adult who has already travelled a path of faith that has led him to the Congregation; it is above all Christ who forms and cultivates his freedom. The pedagogy of the Congregation must therefore be at the service of the dialogue that each candidate personally enters into with God by providing him with the means to discover the vocation to which he aspires and to carry out his discernment.

§2. In order to be able to do this, every brother is accompanied in an atmosphere of listening and dialogue. He is helped to take charge of himself and become responsible for his own formation; to self-evaluate the path he has travelled thus far with the help of his formators; to develop creative fidelity to the gifts he has received from God and to his own vocation.

§3. In order to enable better assimilation of formation by candidates:

- Formators will foster learning that values the brother's experience and takes account of errors as a means to progress.
- Formators will explain why the activities proposed have formative value, as well as the reason for decisions taken regarding a brother.
- Decisions will, as far as possible, be taken with the candidate himself.
- Fostering personal motivation will be preferred to having recourse to injunctions and exhortations.
- To complement the teaching given—which could remain something external and fail to engage the brother on a personal level—formators will awaken the brother's interest by involving him in solving any problems he faces, encouraging him to participate in devising solutions, and helping him to adopt a healthy attitude to any remaining issues.

2. Drawing on the wisdom of the Church and the tools of the contemporary world

106. Initiation into the consecrated life requires a great deal of wisdom and skill. We therefore draw upon the methods, tools, and contents found in the tradition of the Church (Desert Fathers, spiritual masters, spiritualties of the consecrated life, teaching of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life, etc.), but also on those developed by the contemporary world, according to the request of the Council (OT 11): "The norms of Christian education are to be religiously observed and properly complemented by the newer findings of sound psychology and pedagogy." "It should not be forgotten that the principles of Christian pedagogy, which neither undervalue nor render absolute the contribution of the human sciences, remain normative and primary" (DPSE 58).

3. Teaching in an approach that seeks truth and good wise sense

107. §1. Studies play an important role during the years of initial formation. Each brother should discover how intellectual formation sustains his desire for wisdom and can, in accordance with our charism, be placed at the service of all the dimensions of his formation. The role of the formators is to help the young brothers to integrate their studies into their life and vocation, so that they bear fruit throughout their lives. The aim of this period is for a candidate to integrate the fundamentals and acquire the essential habitus, which he should continue to perfect throughout his ongoing formation.

§2. Our charism places emphasis on study and the search for truth, and so it is in keeping with our charism that novices, in addition to being guided in the fundamental knowledge of the word of God, already begin to be introduced to the basics of philosophy. What is sought above all is to introduce brothers to a search for truth that finds its fulfilment in Jesus.

§3. Although lecture-based teaching[62] is an important form of educative transmission, care should be taken not to limit intellectual formation to this form alone. In the different areas of integral formation, an effort should be made to ensure that a variety of teaching methods adapted to the needs of formation are used.

4. Accompanying each person in community life

108. §1. Community life is a fundamental means of formation; in a house of initial formation, the common life is structured around the house's mission to accompany the growth of candidates. Their common life includes community activities that help and strengthen each candidate in his journey to God.

§2. During the first years of formation, the community that welcomes the candidates plays an essential formative role. Within that community, communion among formators will enable them to accompany candidates through concerted cooperation.

§3. Each candidate must be able to benefit from personal accompaniment by qualified formators. In addition to the accompaniment provided by the Novice Master, the candidate is free to choose, if he so desires, the person who will accompany him spiritually, and to whom he will need to open up to in complete confidence. In which case, it is important that the Novice Master and the spiritual accompanier each know their specific role and stick solely to that role. This possibility must be clearly stated to the candidate.

62. Translator's note: *enseignement magistral*.

III. OFFERING PROGRESSIVE AND PERSONALISED FORMATION

109. §1. The Ratio Formationis Congregationis, the Ratio Provincialis, and the local plan of formation propose a programme of formation that progresses and takes into account the time needed to assimilate a new way of life and the content of the programme. Care should be taken to spread the content to be learned over time and to provide criteria for growth that marks out each stage of the process.

§2. The programmes of formation established by the Congregation, the provinces, and each formation house provide brothers with an idea of the pathway proposed to them. The application of these programmes should be sufficiently flexible to allow everyone to progress at their own pace and for the candidate to be able to assess their growth with their formators.

§3. Initial formation begins with postulancy and typically ends once theological studies are completed.

IV. ASSESSING SUITABILITY: THE ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES

110. §1. The Community proposes criteria of evaluation and stages of admission which will make it possible to assess the authenticity of a candidate's calling, their capacity to receive the formation given, and their suitability to live our form of life[63]. According to these criteria, progression from one stage of formation to the next will be confirmed by discernment with the candidate and a vote of the corresponding council.

§2. To prepare for a candidate's admission, the Novice Master and the professed brothers will carry our regular evaluations with the brother in question. At the end of the year, every candidate brother will make a written report of the past year, which he will discuss with the Novice Master and will be added to his file. Assessments carried out by formators will be communicated to the candidate sensitively and clearly. Feedback from people outside of the Congregation of Brothers, especially members of the Family of Saint John and people who participate in activities with the candidate, may be requested and will willingly be taken into account. It is generally beneficial for the brother to know who has been consulted about him.

§3. The community of the house of formation plays a role in discerning the progress of each candidate. Brothers who participate in the discernment of a candidate's admission do so with reverent fear, aware that they are taking part in God's government of the candidate brother, whatever the decision taken. This role takes a definitive form in the vote on a candidate's perpetual profession, which is an eminently religious act for all those who take part.

63. An appendix "Criteria and Norms of Formation" dedicated to formators will be drafted at a later date.

Chapter 6
THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF FORMATORS

I. WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A FORMATOR

1. The mission of the formator

111. §1. The formator is mandated by the authorities of the Community to accompany and form the brothers in initial formation. Among those for whom he is responsible, he will cultivate a love for our vocation, develop their capacity to live out all its dimensions, and help them to deepen their choice. In this way, the formator mediates God's action towards them within the bounds of his specific role.

§2. The three main things a formator does are to provide accompaniment and formation within the domain entrusted to him[64], as well as discernment so that the right decisions can be made with the brother in formation. A formator advises, supports, corrects, and encourages those under his care. He will help each brother to internalise formation received and integrate the spiritual, doctrinal, pastoral, and practical elements necessary for his growth. With the team of formators, he will discern in the name of the Church and the Congregation the ability of each candidate to live our vocation. He will contribute to the process of discernment for admission to ordained ministry.

§3. In line with the Ratio Formationis and the local plan of formation, each formator will contribute to the implementation of a dynamic and concrete pedagogy, paying particular attention to the person he is forming (*cf.* Dir. 60 § 1.2). He will take into account the progress of each brother, the pace of each group, and the cultural particularities of the people for whom he is working.

2. The appointment of formators

112. §1. The Prior Provincial appoints the formators of his province. He will grant them sufficient time prior to their appointment for them to undergo the necessary training to begin their duties. The new formator will receive a mission letter that outlines his various responsibilities, the duration of his mandate, and reminds him of his obligation to undergo regular formation and supervision himself.

§2. It is preferable that older brothers with more experience in pastoral ministry be chosen as formators. The choice to orientate a brother toward the mission of formator can also be taken during his years of theological study. However, he will only take up this ministry once he as acquired pastoral experience and has undergone formation. These prior experiences will enable him to understand the type of apostolic life he is preparing the brothers for in formation (*cf.* DPSE 56).

§3. The main superior and the Director Provincial of Formation will ensure the authentic moral uprightness and qualities of the brothers they choose as formators (*cf.* PI 30). These brothers must have a good understanding of our vocation and our community and fulfil the various criteria set out by the Church (*cf.* DPSE 23-45).

---

64. Translator's note: Being a male religious order, most formators will be male, which is why we have used male pronouns. However, this section applies equally to female formators.

§4. It is recommended that a formator's mandate be relatively long, fixed by renewable periods of three years, up to nine years in total. The other duties he receives must not prevent the brother appointed from exercising his principal mission (*cf.* Can. 651 §3).

3. The preparation of formators

113. §1. As requested by the General Chapter of October 2019, a formator's mandate should always begin with a period of preparation that is "professional, pedagogical, spiritual, human and theological" (PDV 66; *cf.* NW 16). Priority is given to specialised courses for the formation of formators.

§2. Particular care is given to the spiritual preparation of formators, so that they may be "very familiar with the path of seeking God" (VC 66; DPSE 55). The preparation of formators should include formation in listening and in spiritual accompaniment as well as an introduction to pedagogical methods (DPSE 36; 57).

§3. In order to acquire good doctrinal preparation, formators, even if they are not professors, are also encouraged to follow academic studies (*cf.* DPSE 53), particularly in the theology of religious life. The choice of the direction and duration of their study will take into account the programme they have already completed, the duties confided to them, the talents and preferences of the future formator, as well as the needs of the province and the formation team, so that the different competences are represented (*cf.* DPSE 49).

§4. The preparation of formators must develop a healthy openness to the different cultures of the brothers in formation. It is therefore preferable that formators spend a period of time working outside of their usual environment, abroad or in other houses of formation. For certain positions, it is essential that the formator has spent sufficient time living in the country in which he will carry out his mission. In this way, he will become more attuned to the culture and thus better able to grasp its authentic spiritual aspirations and be at ease in interpersonal communication.

§5. The Director Provincial of Formation is the brother directly responsible for formators and the preparation they need to carry out their duties.

4. The continued formation of formators

114. §1. "The experience of the educators is itself a privileged source of their continuing formation" (DPSE 66). It must nevertheless be something that is reviewed, compared, and discussed with experts and peers.

§2. Formators will maintain their own personal study in order to remain up to date with the skills and criteria that undergird their work of accompanying vocations. Participation in sessions in various fields of specialisation will support this work of constant renewal.

§3. Formators must ensure that they remain both fed and refreshed on a personal and spiritual level. It is recommended that they participate in pastoral work in order to maintain their apostolic zeal.

§4. Formators must devote their upmost energy to their work as formators, of which they are the principal agent. Their own ongoing formation will include a supervised review of the exercise of their office with qualified persons[65]. It will also include an annual meeting with the Director Provincial of Formation, with whom they will assess their continued formation programme in light of their responsibilities.

65. *Cf. Acts 2019*, "Orientation Votes on the *Ratio Formationis* Commission (RFC)", no. 10.

5. Code of conduct and supervision

115. §1. Bonds of trust between brothers in formation and their formators constitute the essential basis of formation.

§2. The serious preparation of formators and their supervision contribute greatly to establishing and strengthening this trust.

§3. Formators must always show goodwill and respect. They serve the formation of free and growing persons. They must be committed to confidentiality and maintain professional secrecy—even when their duties have ended.

§4. While carrying out their mission, formators will live simply as "brothers among brothers." Rather than living at an "appropriate distance" from brothers in formation, formators live in an "appropriate presence" to them. The brothers in formation know that if a difficulty should arise, they are able to approach the person in authority who is responsible for their formators.

§5. As part of their cooperation, formators may have to discuss a relationship with a brother in formation they find challenging. The support of their peers in such a scenario can help the formator maintain the right stance and contribute to resolving the difficulty or helping them through it if it persists.

II. WHO ARE THE FORMATORS?

1. The prior of the formation house

116. §1. The prior is responsible for the organisation of the priory and its relationship with the outside world, and he therefore has an influence on the framework of formation. He organises the brothers' duties and apostolates, represents the community at the local level, assures the cohesion of the house, encourages the community to be truly formative, and is the guarantor of a human and material framework conducive to formation.

§2. The prior is the superior for all the perpetually professed brothers, both those in formation and the formators themselves. He ensures that all the brothers assigned to the house participate in their own way to creating a formative climate. Together with the vicar, he is responsible for supporting the logistical aspects of the house. He facilitates the implementation of the pedagogical directives given by the Novice Master.

§3. Regular dialogue between the Prior and Novice Master or Master of the Temporary Professed is necessary, with mutual respect for the responsibilities of each party. As superior of the formation house as a whole, the prior of a noviciate house or formation house of professed brothers is an ex officio member of the formation councils. In turn, the Novice Masters will be ex officio members of the prior's council.

§4. When the Novice Master and the Master of the Temporary Professed live in the same house, the Prior is the guarantor of the common good of the house; he will arbitrate decisions so that the educational community can achieve its mission of the formation of novices and temporary professed brothers without the two objectives interfering with each other.

§5. The Prior exercises a formative role only indirectly—insofar as he organises and leads the community as a whole—and so not all the obligations of preparation for the role of formator apply to him. A Prior's preparation must primarily enable him to assume his office of Prior, while being aware of the objectives of formation and what the role of a formator entails.

2. Novice Masters and Masters of the Temporary Professed, their assistants and the socius

117. §1. The Novice Master and the Master of the Temporary Professed each coordinate an important stage of initial formation: the noviciate and the period of temporary profession. They must pay close attention to the formation of those under their care. The details of their specific mission are discussed in the chapter on the stage of formation they accompany.

§2. When there are more than twelve novices or brothers in simple profession, an assistant to the Novice Master is to be appointed. Close cooperation between the two is necessary.

§3. The Novice Master will make every effort to create a familial atmosphere between the novices and their elders. He is never the sole formator; if necessary, he will ensure that another formator brother (socius) shares more closely with him the life of the group of novices and is available should he need to discuss the community of novices. To ensure the continuity of formation, the Novice Master remains in dialogue with the Postulant Director and the Master of the Temporarily Professed[66].

§4. Unlike the novitiate, building the community of the temporary professed is entrusted in a more active way to the participation and co-responsibility of all its members. The Master of the Temporarily Professed therefore involves the temporary professed brothers in this responsibility. He also supervises the formation of brothers on placement[67].

§5. The brother responsible for the formation of brothers in initial formation who have already made their perpetual vows—the Prior or a brother he delegates—must value their autonomy as "young solemnly professed brothers." His role is principally to help them exercise their full responsibility as professed brothers, to integrate the different dimensions of integral formation—especially intellectual and apostolic formation—and to prepare for their assignment to an apostolic priory. He will also accompany those brothers who are on the pathway to taking Holy Orders in their discernment and preparation for receiving the sacrament[68].

3. The local Director of Studies

118. §1. The Director of Studies in a house of formation is a formator. He co-operates with the Novice Masters in order to help the brothers integrate their studies into their general programme of integral formation. He also feeds back to formators comments and suggestions from teachers, in order to bring unity to integral formation and teaching.

§2. When the majority of classes are given internally, the Director of Studies will establish the Programme of Studies and the list of teachers, in accordance with the ratio studiorum, and include in the programme sessions that are not directly related to intellectual formation, but which form part of the programme of integral formation. He will organise personal accompaniment for the students with a team of tutors. He will represent and coordinate the team of teachers. The Director of Studies also mediates when difficulties arise between teachers and students.

§3. When the house of formation is attached to another institution, the Director of Studies will establish a working relationship with the teaching authorities of that institution, so as to better understand the level of studies and the needs of brothers who are undertaking their formation there. He will take an interest in the atmosphere of studies in the institution and organise the complimentary formation necessary for brothers to complete the curriculum of the Congregation. He will accompany brothers as they integrate the different points of view taught, so that all the resources offered them might form a coherent whole and contribute to a unified pathway of formation. He will guide the brothers in their choice of classes and confirm their final decision.

66. For more details on the role of the Novice Master, see Chapter 15.
67. For more details on the role of the Master of the Temporarily Professed, see Chapter 16.
68. For further information on the role of the brother responsible for young solemnly professed brothers, see Chapter 17.

4. Spiritual accompaniers

119. §1. Spiritual accompaniers may be internal or external to the Congregation and may or may not be resident.

§2. They will be attentive to the goal of formation in our community and take the reality of the person they accompany and the pace of their growth into account as they undertake to:

- Introduce the brother to self-knowledge, to a perception of his true self before God and his brothers, and to what he is experiencing in his inner life: the movements of the Spirit; human thoughts and thoughts of the psychological domain; thoughts coming from the evil spirit.
- Listen with the brother to the Holy Spirit who speaks through the events of his life and his personal history.
- Invite the brother to listen to God in his life and progressively discover how God leads him.
- Confirm his spiritual discernment with respect to the word of God and how he might put it into practice.
- Give advice on his spiritual reading, making sure he is introduced to the great spiritual tradition as well as the important aspects of the spiritual life.
- Shed light on his spiritual discernment through sound common sense and authentic spiritual theology.
- Help the brother to imitate the sentiments of Christ[69], in accordance with the charism of the Congregation, to practice the evangelical counsels, and to journey in the discernment of his vocation.
- Encourage "self-detachment" from things that distance him from God and the values of our vocation.
- Help him to assimilate and embrace his own cultural traditions and discern how they fit with his Christian faith and the reality of an authentic vocation.
- Encourage him to gradually organise his life according to the reality of his vocation.

§3. Any brother in formation, including novices, may speak with a spiritual accompanier other than his formators (*cf.* Can. 220; PI 52). However, in the novitiate, the Novice Master also has the mandate of being the spiritual accompanier of each and every one of the novices.

5. Other formators

120. The status of formator may be given to other brothers who play a specific role in the accompaniment of brothers in initial formation (the brother in charge of apostolic formation or the organisation of human and community formation, etc.). They will participate in meetings for formators and have the same duties as all the formators.

69. *Cf.* Ph 2:5; VC 9; 18; 65; 66; 68; 69; Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, *Witnesses to the Beauty of God: The Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecreta* 25 Years Later, 25 March 2021.

III. FORMATION TEAMS AND THEIR INTERNAL COOPERATION

1. Composition of a formation team

121. In a house of initial formation erected by the Congregation[70], the formation team is made up of the Novice Master and any assistants he may have, the Prior, the Director of Studies, and other brothers who have been specifically appointed as formators. In general, resident teachers are not automatically part of the formation team.

2. Cooperation within the formation team

122. **§1.** It is the Novice Master's role to preside over the formation team, in which he will foster co-responsibility. He will provide a vision of the whole and ensure demands made on brothers are fairly distributed. He will lead reflections on the decisions that must be prepared in common, without seeking consensus at all costs. He will ensure the implementation and evaluation of the local formation programme in conjunction with the formation team.

§2. In order to provide a service of real quality to the brothers confided to their care, formators willingly engage in a common educative project (*cf.* Dir. 59d). They wish to form Brothers of Saint John, whom everyone will recognise by their love for one another, and so are committed to creating a "genuine educating community" (RFIS 132) "that will answer to the Lord's prayer "That they be one" (*cf.* John 17:11)" (OT 5). Formators come together to intercede for the brothers in formation as a community. In order to live out their service in a spirit of communion, they meet regularly to decide on the best way to implement the formation programmes, discuss with the Prior the organisation of the house, and watch over the growth of each of the brothers in initial formation (*cf.* RFIS 132).

§3. The work of formators requires cohesion, loyalty, attention, and a ability to communicate. They also attend to the good of every brother (*cf.* Dir. 60 § 1.2). Their cooperation requires certain natural dispositions, but also "knowledge of how to work in groups" (PDV 66) and the desire to be jointly responsible. "Therefore, the selection and formation of individual educators, even those personally very gifted, are insufficient if they are not capable of constituting a true and proper "teaching team" whose members are united in spirit and collaborate fraternally" (DPSE 11).

§4. Together with the Prior and his council, formators help maintain a suitable atmosphere, create a framework that is conducive to prayer and study, and ensure the upkeep of the house and the houses' finances.

§5. The formation team will remain in contact with all those who, in various capacities, are involved in the process of formation: teachers, spiritual accompaniers, and any other people involved. The Novice Master is the link between the formation team and the Prior Provincial and the Director Provincial of Formation.

3. The different areas of accompaniment

123. **§1.** In order to ensure an integral formation, the formation team will ensure the provision of spiritual, apostolic, and human formation in addition to the studies already provided for by the Director of Studies.

---

70. *Cf. Constitutions*, no. 130.

§2. Formators will divide these different areas of responsibility among themselves. If a brother of the house who is not a formator is given one of these tasks, he then formally becomes a formator. If the brothers of the house cannot take on all the roles themselves, they are able to call in external help from a brother, who will commit to regular visits to the formation community and will become a formator. If no brother can be found who is capable of undertaking this task, help can be sought outside of the Community.

a) Spiritual leadership of the formation community

124. Formators choose an experienced religious to coordinate formation in the spiritual life and the liturgy (spiritual conferences, testimony, shared groups, reading lists, liturgical formation, etc.). He may combine this responsibility with other formation duties. He may offer advice to the Novice Master and Prior in the selection of people to preach retreats and the way liturgical seasons and feasts are celebrated. Together with the Novice Master, he will draw up a list of spiritual accompaniers from which the brothers can choose, and ensure they have sufficient prior formation.

b) Accompanying apostolic formation

125. §1. The brother in charge of apostolic formation has the mission to provide, in consultation with the Novice Master and the Master of the Temporary Professed, a practical and theoretical formation programme for apostolic life, in harmony with each stage of the brothers' growth. He will oversee the preparation of brothers for their future placements and the review of their experience of placement once completed. He may combine this responsibility with other formation duties.

§2. Apostolic activities are chosen according to their pedagogical value (relevance, clarity of mission, quality of preparation, ecclesial experience, community style, the presence of someone who can accompany them, the possibility of reviewing the completed activity).

c) The area of human formation

126. One of the formators will be responsible for coordinating the human dimension of formation. With the help of competent persons in the areas of psychology, sport, medicine, etc., he will promote a community atmosphere that is conducive to human maturation and organise appropriate activities (*cf.* RFIS 137).

4. Formator meetings

127. §1. Formators will meet regularly to address questions concerning the formation or accompaniment of the brothers.

§2. Every six months, the Council of Formators will undertake, according to the appropriate criteria, a careful evaluation of the maturation of novices or professed brothers under their care. They will be very attentive to the way in which their decisions and evaluations are communicated to the brothers in formation, making sure they are done so with tact and clarity.

§3. When a brother is simultaneously responsible for several areas of formation, he will ensure that he offers input according to the different perspectives of the domains under his charge, especially during evaluation councils or in review meetings.

§4. When a brother someone accompanies is being discussed at the Council of Formators, that person will listen without ever intervening, so that the confidentiality of the internal forum is respected; they will not take part in votes concerning the brothers they accompany.

5. Establishing rules for the houses of formation

128. §1. Based on this Ratio Formationis Congregationis and in accordance with its Ratio Provincialis, each house of formation should draw up a "local plan of formation," which will present the elements of local pedagogy, the structures and dynamics of the organisation and cooperation specific to that place, as well as specific activities and classes (*cf*. RFIS 10). The Congregation will provide an outline to help facilitate its preparation.

§2. A written customary document should also be drawn up which sets out the house rules and the concrete procedures that affect the brothers in initial formation.

§3. These two texts—which can be combined into a single document—will be communicated to the formators and to the brothers in formation. They will be ratified by the Director Provincial of Formation after consulting with the Director General of Formation.

IV. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE COMMUNITY OR FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT FORMATORS

1. Teachers and tutors for studies

129. §1. By awakening the intelligence of the brothers, teachers and tutors contribute to the brothers' formation. They are not automatically formators, even though some of them will reside in the house of formation.

§2. "Their teaching will acquire greater vitality if they learn to establish the links between their teaching on the one hand and piety, life and pastoral problems on the other" (DPSE 62). Their personal witness is often decisive in the eyes of students: seeing in the person of their teacher that knowledge can become a spiritual heritage which enlightens and transforms life is a powerful experience (*cf*. DPSE 46). Conscious of their influence, teachers place themselves at the service of the students' integral growth.

2. The different people who contribute from outside the formation house

130. §1. Whatever their role (formation in chant, reading, language, etc.), every person who contributes to the house of formation must be aware that they are interacting with brothers who are engaged in a process of initial formation and respect their vocational discernment.

§2. Formators may request the opinion of these external contributors, orally or in writing, about the brothers with whom they have been in contact. The way in which this consultation takes place should be determined in the local plan of formation.

3. The importance of laypeople, especially women

131. §1. Formators will willingly involve laypeople in the initial formation of brothers. They will ensure that consecrated women and married women can contribute to the integral growth of the brothers in initial formation.

§2. Lay men and women may be asked to teach, to lead an activity of human, spiritual, or apostolic formation, or even to provide spiritual accompaniment, provided they have received specific formation enabling them to understand the challenges of religious life.

§3. Depending on the context, there is no obstacle to a couple, consecrated woman, or married woman being included in the meetings of formators, so as to enrich the discernment of the team through the diversity of states of life and the complementarity between man and woman. The way in which they are to participate should be set out in the plan for local formation.

PART TWO

The Dynamics of Formation

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

1. Aim and prescriptive value of Part Two

132. §1. Part Two describes "a formation programme inspired by [our] particular charism" (VC 68) for all the brothers of the Congregation. Since the main purpose of the Ratio Formationis Congregationis is to specify how a Brother of Saint John is to be formed at the service of the Church, the following six chapters can be viewed as a detailed presentation of the concrete ways in which we wish, on a daily basis, to incarnate the charism of our community we have received.

§2. The chapters which follow first and foremost define a programme of ongoing formation for every brother of the Congregation. They give shape to the area of ongoing formation according to its six dimensions, highlighting certain areas of priority in accordance with our charism. Since initial formation is a part of ongoing formation, the following six chapters also deal with the formation of young brothers who are preparing for profession and their assignment to priories as perpetually professed.

§3. Part Two sets out guidelines which, without being legally binding—not having a strictly juridical form—together sketch out the ideal life we are seeking. This part provides a sure guide that each brother is invited to follow in order to grow in his journey of sanctification.

2. A guide to reading Part Two

133. §1. Part Two of the Ratio Congregationis is divided into two sections, both of which contain three chapters:

- The fundamental dynamics of formation: One of the main challenges of our formation is to successfully combine spiritual formation (Chapter 7) and human formation (Chapter 8)—to look to the skies with our feet on the ground. Since the search for truth influences our understanding of the spiritual life and man's vocation, and occupies an essential place in our vocation, intellectual formation (Chapter 9) is addressed in this first section, which describes the fundamental dynamics of our formation.
- The dynamics of formation for consecrated life: The second section focuses on formation for consecrated life. For our community, as for all religious, this formation unfolds according to the three dimensions of consecration, communion, and mission. The second section therefore includes formation in the vows (Chapter 10), in community life (Chapter 11), and in the apostolic life (Chapter 12).

§2. Each chapter is structured in such a way that the wording of the heading will set out the main objectives of formation in the area concerned. In general, after each heading, the first paragraph will set out one or more formation objectives, that is, an aspect that we are called to incorporate into our life. The second paragraph will act like a tool box and recommend ways in which one can achieve the desired objective when a brother wants to go further in that aspect of formation[71].

71. In some instances, before the objective of formation is set out, a paragraph will be provided to specify a particular point which will better enable us to understand the objective or put it into perspective. Similarly, after the suggested means are set out, a paragraph may be provided that will present how the community is involved (Congregation, Province, or priory) in that aspect of formation, or other useful information (criteria, observations, etc.).

SECTION ONE

The Fundamental Dynamics of Formation

Chapter 7
SPIRITUAL FORMATION

134. Growth in our relationship with Christ is the goal of spiritual formation and the primary thing sought after in all our formation. Human formation is its foundation, intellectual formation its aide, fraternal life its milieu, apostolic life its fruit. In turn, each of these aspects finds it centre, dynamism, and fulfilment in spiritual formation.

I. LEADING A LIFE WITH CHRIST IN THE SPIRIT

1. Seeking Christ

a) Drawing near to Christ through faith

135. **§1.** Encountering Christ, which is the starting point of our whole spiritual life, is above all a grace, an initiative that comes from God. It is nevertheless up to us to maintain and deepen that grace. It is in faith that we discover Christ's presence, welcome his word, and are born to divine life. Spiritual formation should help us to open ourselves to Christ who comes to us and enables us to respond most fittingly to his call.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother[72]:

- Abide in the presence of Christ, according to the commandment given by Jesus (Jn 15:4,9), through meditation on the Scriptures—especially the Gospel of St John—and the means set out by the spiritual tradition of the Church.
- Learn, in the footsteps of the spiritual masters, to see the surrounding world as a sacrament of the Lord's presence and to interpret the events of one's life in his light.
- Seek, in all the exercises of his spiritual life, to intensify his faith, hope, and love (charity), through which he has relationship with God.

b) Becoming humble by recognising oneself to be a sinful and saved creature

136. **§1.** Every encounter we have with Christ deepens our experience of salvation: in him, we discover the eternal and creative love of God who precedes us, and we perceive, as if in a mirror, the depth of our sinfulness. This is a foundational experience on our journey with Christ; we must constantly return to it, working to recognise and accept our condition as sinful and saved creatures, developing the virtue of humility.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

---

72. It might be useful to recall that in this chapter, as in the whole of Part Two, this formula introduces the reader to suggestions of concrete pathways he might follow in order to reach the objective of formation set out in the first paragraph.

- Discover the ways of humility offered by the spiritual tradition of the Church.
- Place himself in the presence of the thrice Holy God, adore Him, and acknowledge himself to be a sinner before Him (*cf.* Is 6), while discerning in faith the image of God that we bear deep within ourselves.
- In his examination of conscience, try to discover the Lord's love present throughout the day, ask for his eyes to be opened to his own sin, and confess that Christ is man's saviour and friend.

§3. The way in which we seek the truth in philosophy and theology should dispose our minds to recognise God's plan of salvation for mankind, His presence in creation and in our souls, His benevolent providence, and thus dispose us to worship Him with all our heart and mind.

c) Setting out on the path of interiority

137. §1. Since Christ dwells within us, it is first of all by entering into our heart that we can encounter him. An important part of our spiritual formation therefore consists in cultivating our interiority so that we can encounter Christ in the depths of our soul and hear his word there. Growing in our awareness of this space deep within us where God is present is essential if our spiritual life is to flourish.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to be recollected and enter into his heart in order to find in the centre of his soul—deeper than anything physical, psychological, or intellectual—the place where he is fully himself before God and where he can enter into truthful conversation with him.
- Develop, with the help of a spiritual accompanier, an understanding of his inner stirrings, which will gradually enable him to recognise the movements that come from his own soul and the impulses that come from God. In this dynamic of interiorisation, he will gradually discover his true identity in the light of God. The journey of faith is also a journey to his true self (Lk 15:17).
- Seek to enter into silence by bringing himself away from the external promptings of his faculties and passions, by calming his heart before God, by invoking the Holy Spirit, and by using appropriate traditional means (the word of God, lectures, icons, or his memory) to re-centre himself on Christ.
- Protect and nurture this interior dwelling place in him, by acquiring what the spiritual tradition calls "watchfulness of heart," "vigilance of heart," or "guarding the heart,"—a spiritual attitude that consists in knowing what to let into our hearts and what not to let in, like a watchman guarding the gates of a city.

§3. According to the teaching of St John, God dwells in the souls of those who love him and keep his commandments (*cf.* Jn 14:23). Our access to this presence has its foundation and criterion of truth in the way in which we keep his commandments (*cf.* 1 Jn 2:4).

d) Learning to live in contemplative prayer [73]

138. §1. By establishing a personal relationship with Christ, we enter into a dialogue which becomes "an intimate sharing between friends (...), taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know

73. Translators note: "contemplative prayer" translates *oraison*, following common usage and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (*cf.* CCC nos 2709-2719.

loves us[74]". Our formation must help us to enter into a life of contemplative and continual prayer that opens us to contemplation of the Beloved One (*cf.* Song 2:16) and enables us to abide with him[75].

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Base his life of contemplative prayer on meditation on the word of God. It is by listening to God speaking to us that we learn to enter into dialogue with Him. The word kept in our hearts brings consistency to our prayer, nourishes our desire to know God, and inspires our conversation with Him. The Liturgy of the Hours and the sacraments, which bring us into privileged contact with the word, find their natural extension in interior and contemplative prayer.
- Work on cultivating inner silence by learning to listen, to moderate his reactions and words, to channel his imagination and to welcome the presence of God in the simplicity of the present moment.
- Practice spiritual reading as a simple means of maintaining the desire that animates contemplative prayer and deepens its practice. Our desire is to be taught by God (*cf.* Jn 6:45) and to learn from the masters of a life of contemplative prayer recognised by the tradition.
- Generously devote time to practicing contemplative prayer, nourishing and renewing it. Regular times of solitude, retreat, and desert will enable a brother to step away in order to worship God and listen to Him in silence. The time of annual retreat especially lends itself to renewing our friendship with Christ and refocusing on prayer.

§3. Intimate dialogue with God takes place in many ways depending on the period of our spiritual life and the direction God is leading us in. Through examination of conscience and spiritual accompaniment, we can identify the way in which God leads us to contemplative prayer and evaluate the way in which we dispose ourselves to its practice.

e) Participating in the prayer and priesthood of Christ

139. §1. Jesus reveals to us that his Father seeks those who worship in spirit and truth (*cf.* Jn 4:23). Jesus, the High Priest, gives us access to this worship by the gift of his Spirit and by his self-offering even to the point of the Cross. We seek to follow him so that through him, with him, and in him, our life becomes a gift and an offering to God for his Church.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- During the celebration of the Eucharist, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or the Divine Office, seek to put himself in the school of Christ (*cf.* Mt 11:29), to enter into the prayer of the Beloved Son (Jn 17), and to let himself be transformed in order to become a living and holy offering, an offering pleasing to God (*cf.* Rom 12:2).
- Seek to experience suffering and everything he undergoes on a daily basis as an invitation to participate in the charity of Christ, who offers himself to the Father. These moments of suffering, passively endured, can then become moments of active offering and spiritual formation (*cf.* Heb 5:8).

74. St Teresa of Avila, *Life*, Ch. 8. [1st translation: Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, Ch. 8, translated by K. Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 2008); Second translation: Teresa of Avila, *The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, translated by J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1957).]
75. On the sound practice of contemplative prayer (oraison), it would be fruitful to consult the CCC (2709-2719).

2. Learning to lead a life in the Spirit

a) Learning to let ourselves be led by the Spirit

140. §1. The Holy Spirit, given by Christ the High Priest, is the primary artisan of our spiritual life: it is he who denounces the world in us (*cf.* Jn 16:8-11); he who opens us up to eternal life in new birth (*cf.* Jn 3:5); he who leads us interiorly to the whole Truth (*cf.* Jn 16:13) and reminds us of everything Jesus said (*cf.* Jn 14:26); he who makes us sons in the Son and helps us to cry, "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6). We therefore seek in him the source that gives us life, give him pride of place in our lives, and allow him to lead us.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Seek to live in the fear of the Lord by welcoming God's initiative, letting the Spirit lead him, and renouncing any desire to be the master of his own spiritual growth.
- Ensure he is not the sole judge of his spiritual life[76] and rely on a qualified spiritual accompanier who can help him to perceive and articulate the movements of the Spirit in his heart.
- Actively seek to discern where God is leading him through the discernment of spirits (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:1) and by listening to the Holy Spirit in the way verified by the spiritual tradition of the Church.

§3. Obedience to God in all its forms is the privileged means by which we remain under the guidance of the Spirit (*cf.* Acts 5:32)[77]. Jesus promised he would pray for those who keep his commandments out of love to receive from the Father the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive (*cf.* Jn 14:15-19).

b) Cooperating with the work of grace

141. §1. The Holy Spirit, the principal agent in our spiritual life, calls us to act through him, with him, and in him, so that we work in synergy with the Lord (*cf.* 1 Cor 3:9). Sanctification, which is the goal of our formation, is first and foremost the work of God; yet it requires our free and informed cooperation. Our response to God's initiatives must become increasingly more personal, concrete, and total.

§2. Our cooperation with God takes place above all at the level of our conscience; this is the most secret centre of man, the sanctuary where he is alone with his Creator and where God's voice is heard (*cf.* GS 16). To gain entry to this holy land, a brother must get into the habit of going beyond the superficial and enter into constant dialogue with the Holy Spirit about what is most intimate and personal to him; this is how we learn to sense, discern, and act according to this inner voice[78].

§3. Our cooperation in the work of grace involves a certain progression. Starting with our fundamental conversion, when we give God prime place in our lives, we are led to a new way of existing and thinking in which we want to seek God in all things; this is achieved through many concrete undertakings to love like Christ in deed and truth (*cf.* 1 Jn 3:18-24). Our cooperation reaches its fullness when we want to know nothing but Christ (*cf.* 2 Cor 2:2), and when our light shines before men, so that when they see our good works, they give glory to the Father who is in heaven (*cf.* Mt 5:16).

c) Letting ourselves be habitually led by the Spirit (gifts and charisms)

---

76. John Cassian, *Conferences*, II, 2, "On Discretion".
77. See the section on obedience in Chapter 10, nos 250-255.
78. On the formation of the conscience, see Chapter 8, nos 192-194.

142. §1. Spiritual life flourishes in the gifts of the Spirit. Through the seven gifts given at Baptism and Confirmation, the Spirit teaches us to live as children of God, enlightening us, prompting us to act, enlivening us, and deepening our love for God and neighbour[79]. The Divine Breath also leads us by means of charisms, which he distributes to each person according to his good pleasure, for the benefit of the Church or of the person himself. In order to grow in our spiritual life, we must each seek to open ourselves up to the different promptings of the Spirit and learn to depend on the gifts related to sanctifying or charismatic graces[80].

§2. A brother who wants to live more intensely by the gifts of the Holy Spirit must learn to let himself be led by the Spirit beyond his own understanding, but never against the moral law, the common doctrine and magisterium of the Church, or the precept of his conscience: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15).

§3. To go further in this aspect, a brother should work patiently to discover the gifts and charisms with which he is endowed (*cf.* LG 12), supported by appropriate formation and accompaniment, and conscious that the gifts given by God can evolve over time. Authorities and formators will ensure that every brother is initiated, starting in initial formation, to the traditional and contemporary ways of living and developing their charisms and gifts (fasting, prayer, retreats, etc.).

d) Participating in the life and mission of the Church

143. §1. It is the same Spirit who sustains the faith of Christians and brings about the unity of the Body of Christ; the same Spirit who provides the Church with both hierarchical and charismatic gifts. That is why every life in the Spirit naturally leads to a filial love for the Church and takes concrete form through engagement in ecclesial service or mission.

§2. As he listens to the Holy Spirit, a brother must learn to see in the Church the body of which he is a member, to know how to find his place in it, and to enter into the unity and communion willed by Christ for his Church.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to compare the calls of the Spirit he discerns in himself with the teaching of the Church, and to submit his discernment to the authority of the Church's shepherds.
- Seek to cooperate with the harmony that the Spirit creates between the different gifts in the Church[81].
- Feel concern for the events of the local and universal Church and bring them to prayer.

II. LEARNING TO NOURISH OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

144. It is down to us to not only familiarise ourselves with the fundamental ways in which our spiritual life is fed, but also to maintain our hunger and thirst for them. By becoming familiar with these resources that God makes available to us, we can sustain our fervour and beg for the grace of spiritual growth.

79. *Cf.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, Q. 68-70. For Thomas, the gifts enable us to live the evangelical beatitudes and the fruits of the Spirit.
80. *Cf. Idem*, Q. 111.
81. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iuveniscit Ecclesia*, no. 10.

1. Nourishing our relationship with Christ

a) The word of God

145. §1. It is our desire that the word of God be the centre of our personal, spiritual, human, community, religious, intellectual, and apostolic life, in order to acquire spiritual knowledge of Jesus Christ and the "mystery of his will" (Eph 1:9; *cf.* Col 1:9). To achieve this, every brother must be able to make use of the different ways of being nourished by Scripture (lectio divina, or continua, liturgical reading, theological or exegetical reading, prayerful reading during contemplative prayer, etc.). It is important that every brother learns to study, meditate on, and pray with the word of God in such a way that it animates both his interior life and his external actions.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Spend some time every day reading and meditating on sacred Scripture, preparing himself for contemplative prayer and obedience to God.
- Give special place to lectio divina according to the traditional method taken up by Pope Benedict XVI: lectio, meditatio, oratio, contemplatio, and actio (*cf.* VD 87).
- Learn to read the Scriptures "in communion with the Church, that is, with all the great witnesses to this word, beginning with the earliest Fathers up to the saints of our own day, up to the present-day magisterium" (VD 86), drawing inspiration also from theologians and exegetes (*cf.* DV 8).
- Become more attentive to the daily challenges of the word of God (*cf.* VC 71) in order to live one's consecration to God, being aware that consecrated life "is born from hearing the word of God and embracing the Gospel as its rule of life" (VD 83).
- Welcome the word of God by opening one's heart to both individual and community discernment of the ways of the Lord in the apostolic field.

§3. The priory community fosters fervour and unity among the brothers when it comes together for the "joyful sharing of the riches drawn from the word of God, thanks to which the brothers or sisters grow together and help one another to make progress in the spiritual life" (VC 94).

b) The Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist

146. §1. "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows" (SC 10). The liturgy holds a central place in our life and spiritual growth. Every brother must learn to find in this source the nourishment he needs to encounter Christ and share in the power of his resurrection; to unite himself to the spiritual worship into which Christ has introduced his Church and take part in the liturgical action "fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects" (SC 11).

§2. In order to find nourishment in the liturgy, we:

- Seek to renew in each liturgical celebration our astonishment before the paschal mystery and to rediscover every day the beauty of the Christian celebration, which leads to true worship[82].

82. *Cf.* Pope Francis, *Desiderio Desideravi*, nos 21, 25.

- Ensure that we carefully tend to every aspect of the celebration, respect the rubrics, and develop the ars celebrandi and the ars dicendi as an expression of our way of being in the presence of God[83].
- Make the liturgy a driving force of our zeal for evangelisation and celebrate in the liturgy the fruits of our apostolic work[84].
- Ask the Spirit to animate our liturgical prayer and make the symbols of the liturgy resonate within us as we await the world to come.

§3. All the brothers will receive basic formation in the study of the liturgy in order to grasp its theological meaning and "acquire the capacity to comprehend the euchological texts, the ritual dynamics and their anthropological significance[85]". Furthermore, every discipline of theology must show its intimate connection with the liturgy[86].

147. §1. The celebration of Mass and Eucharistic Adoration are an important part of our day. Even more than all the other sacraments, the Eucharist actualises the Paschal Mystery and makes it present in our lives. For every brother, daily participation in the Eucharist is an anchor and source of spiritual vitality. The Eucharist brings together and unites the brothers of a priory, especially in the conventual Mass. We want to become a Eucharistic people, whose actions, thoughts, feelings, and choices resemble those of Christ.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Prepare for every Eucharistic celebration, in particular by going through the readings beforehand and tending to the quality of singing, gestures, etc.
- Work on living the Mass in an interior way that is consistent with a life of contemplative prayer, while also fully participating in the liturgical actions.
- Extend the Mass through a brief period of silent thanksgiving, which helps make us aware of the immensity of God's gift, stimulates our thirst for the Eucharist, and helps us to avoid trivialising the celebration of the sacrament.
- Adore the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day in order to unite ourselves with him and bring the world to the Father with him.

c) Constant prayer

148. §1. The goal of our life of contemplative prayer and adoration, nourished by the word of God and the liturgy, is to help us to remain in constant prayer. "Abiding" with the Lord is at the heart of the vocation of the beloved disciple in John's Gospel. We want to learn to pray without ceasing (*cf.* 1 Thes 5:17), and without losing heart (*cf.* Lk 18:1).

§2. In order to remain in prayer, we recommend that each brother:

- Punctuate his day with regular acts of adoration, love, or surrender, which remind him of the presence of God and maintain in him the desire to remain in His presence.
- Draw on the methods taught by the spiritual tradition: "vigilance of heart," "aspirations or ejaculatory prayers," repetitive prayers ("Jesus prayer," rosary, etc.).

83. *Idem*, nos 23, 48-60.
84. *Cf. Idem*; EG 24.
85. Pope Francis, *Desiderio Desideravi*, no. 35.
86. *Cf. Idem*, no. 37.

- Seek to enter into Jesus' prayer to the Father, especially the prayer he prayed on the threshold of his Passion (*cf.* n 17).

§3. In order to maintain a sense of constant prayer, silence, and the presence of God, we regularly take time for solitude and desert. This gives us the time we need to devote ourselves freely to prayer, meditation, and discernment, while abiding in the presence of God. These moments dedicated solely to God help us to refocus on the essential, revitalise, and give us new energy for mission.

2. Discerning and carrying out God's will

149. **§1.** Spiritual discernment is based on the conviction that the Spirit of God acts in the intimacy of the heart and in the conscience of every person[87]. It helps us to "know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil (...) [and] to examine what is within us – our desires, anxieties, fears and questions – and what takes place all around us – "the signs of the times" – and thus to recognize the paths that lead to complete freedom. "Test everything; hold fast to what is good" (1 Thess 5:21)[88]".

§2. In order to nourish ourselves on accomplishing the Father's will (*cf.* Jn 4:34), we seek to deepen our spiritual discernment by learning to listen to God, to test what is in our hearts, to discern the spirits which animate the heart (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:1), and to choose with the freedom of the children of God.

§3. To form his spiritual discernment, we recommend each brother:

- Prepare for discernment through "prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel[89]", and by making, "in dialogue with the Lord, a sincere daily examination of conscience[90]".
- Remember that "discernment is a grace" and that "[e]ven though it includes reason and prudence, it goes beyond them[91]".
- Seek to develop his attentiveness to the voice of God who speaks in the events of life.
- Learn to listen to the voice of his conscience and to receive reality as it is given to be known[92].

§4. The pathways of community discernment are presented in Chapter 11, and its apostolic application in Chapter 12.

3. Being formed by spiritual reading and spiritual theology

150. **§1.** Spiritual reading extends our prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, supports our life of prayer, and contributes to the education of our moral life. By nourishing our meditation, it "engages our thought, imagination, emotion and desire", and enables us to "deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ" (*cf.* CCC 2705; 2708)]. Every brother must gradually learn to nourish his spiritual life with the treasures of spiritual literature, be able to benefit from this reading, and develop his own work in spiritual theology.

§2. In this spirit, we recommend that each brother:

---

87. *Cf. Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod 2018: Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment*, no. 112.
88. Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 2018, nos 166, 168.
89. *Idem*, no. 166.
90. *Idem*, no. 169.
91. *Idem*, no. 170; See also nos 171-72.
92. *Cf.* Instrumentum Laboris for the Synod 2018: Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment, nos 112-119.

- Direct his spiritual reading above all towards the development of a spiritual theology which seeks an understanding of the major pathways recognised by the Doctors and witnesses of the spiritual tradition and an understanding of the stages and essential elements of the spiritual life.
- Form himself in the school of the Fathers of the Church and spiritual masters, reading a major spiritual work at least once a year.
- Remain open to a healthy variety of spiritual reading (from different schools, eras, and ecclesial traditions) and take a discerning interest in more contemporary spiritual works, which often combine current issues with the spiritual life.
- Ask the person who gives him spiritual accompaniment for suggestions for reading that might be adapted to his current needs.

§3. It may be appropriate to propose the reading of a spiritual work as community intellectual work. Every priory must set up a library that is stocked with the fundamental works of the spiritual tradition, for the good of the brothers and the people to whom we offer counsel.

4. Uniting ourselves to Christ through the evangelical counsels

151. **§1.** The profession of the evangelical counsels configures us to Christ, making our own the life Jesus chose for himself and his mother, and which he proposed to the disciples who followed him (*cf.* LG 46, 44). As a summary of the Gospel and the spirit of the beatitudes, the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience trace out a path for our spiritual life; they permeate our sequela Christi and give our spiritual life its proper form.

§2. Our profession is the means by which we permanently unite ourselves to Christ and journey towards the perfection of charity. Pedagogy specific to the vows is presented in chapter 10.

5. Recognising Christ in our brothers

152. **§1.** Our communion with Christ also grows when we obey the commandment of fraternal charity. Love of neighbour—especially the most in need—enables us to recognise the presence of Christ in them. In this sense, our fraternal life is both a requirement and a real resource for our spiritual life. We want to learn to discover the love that Jesus has for our brothers, to discover his presence in each person he gives us to love, and to place ourselves in his school by stooping down like him before our brothers (*cf.* Jn 13:14-16).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Receive every person, especially the poorest, as a sign of God's presence, and welcome them, through evangelical discernment, as God's word to him[93].
- Allow himself to be evangelised by Jesus, who reveals to his friends how to love and serve his brothers following his example.
- Pray regularly for each of the brothers in his priory.

---

93. In reference to Mt 25:40, several Fathers of the Church speak of an overlooked sacrament: the "sacrament of one's brother." John Chrysostom in particular highlighted the intrinsic link between the sacrament of the altar and the sacrament of one's brother: "The body of Christ upon the altar has no need of precious garments, but a pure soul to receive him, whereas the body of Christ formed by the poor, who are his members, requires much aid and attention" (*Homilies on Matthew*, 50). [Translator's note: this passage was translated directly from the French to maintain the original emphasis.]

6. Uniting ourselves to Christ in mission

153. §1. Just as Christ's existence is wholly identified with his being sent by the Father, so mission is an essential part of the Christian life and an indispensable means of spiritual growth (*cf.* Jn 17:18; 20:21); it brings us closer to Christ, configures us to him, and gives impetus to our spiritual life. Apostolic activity "contains its own riches which nourish union with God[94]" ; with patience and humility, we want to develop a missionary spirituality and carry out our apostolate in a spirit of sanctification so as to make it a source of communion with God. "A missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness[95]".

§2. The spiritual pedagogy of mission is addressed in Chapter 12 on apostolic formation.

III. PUTTING THE EXERCISES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE INTO PRACTICE

154. Our desire to follow the Lamb after the example of John[96] and to drink from Christ's cup[97] requires that we humbly accept to lead a life of conversion and penitence as disciples of Jesus. Christ exhorted the crowds to the practice of prayer (*cf.* Mt 6:6-15), penance (*cf.* Mt 4:17), asceticism (*cf.* Mt 6:16-18), spiritual combat (*cf.* Mt 4:1-11), and works of mercy (*cf.* Mt 6:1-5). These different aspects form part of every spiritual life; the way in which they are practiced should be regularly evaluated with the brother's spiritual accompanier. Since the previous sections have already dealt with contemplative prayer and constant prayer, this section will focus on the other fundamental aspects of the life of a disciple of Christ.

1. Practicing penance

155. §1. "Under the influence of the word of God and in the perspective of the kingdom[98]", we strive to change our heart and way of life. To achieve this, we seek to develop an interior attitude of penance that involves "a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed[99]." This interior penance must be accompanied by an effort to produce fruit in our life that supports the authenticity of our approach; it is then "one's whole existence that becomes penitential, that is to say, directed toward a continuous striving for what is better[100]."

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Work to discern what in him opposes the Holy Spirit, to put off the old self and put on the new.

---

94. CICLSAL, *The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life*, 1980, no. 6.
95. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 90.
96. *Cf.* Jn 1:35-39; Rev 5:6-14; 14:4.
97. *Cf.* Mt 20:23; *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 14, 2: "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of You, (...) I give You thanks that You have counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before You as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as You, the ever-truthful God, have foreordained, have revealed beforehand to me, and now have fulfilled." [Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>. Accessed 15.03.23]
98. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, no. 4.
99. CCC 1431.
100. John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, no. 4.

- Practice, with the interiority Christ asks of him, the acts of penance recommended by the spiritual tradition of the Church.
- Work to renounce sin, according to his baptismal promises, going regularly to the sacrament of penance and making an examination of conscience every day.
- Nurture "the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of His grace[101]".
- Welcome as a grace the pain and sadness that accompany repentance, while praying to the Lord to "[restore] the joy of thy salvation" (Ps 50:12) and seeking to develop a genuine aversion to sin.

2. Practicing asceticism

156. §1. Christ practiced asceticism as a preparation for spiritual combat and mission. As religious, ascetic discipline is a constitutive means of our sequela Christi. The tradition develops this evangelical awareness by teaching that Christian asceticism is spiritual therapy, a means of healing and liberation and a priestly offering of our life[102]. Indeed, any well-ordered spiritual life—just like any serious endeavour in sport, art, or intellectual research—involves an aspect of discipline.

§2. Practicing asceticism enables us to maintain awareness that we are poor and in need of the Lord, crying out to him because we can do nothing by ourselves[103]. We seek to offer up our efforts in order to beg for the gift of holiness, developing our will by giving substance to the work of grace. We must always seek to practice asceticism with the moderation that comes from Christian faith, avoiding both excess and negligence. The value of asceticism is not measured first and foremost by the difficulty of the effort undertaken, but by the fruits of conversion it enables us to obtain.

§3. To practice asceticism well, we recommend that each brother:

- Develop true knowledge of himself, his strengths and weaknesses, so that he can discern the areas of conversion on which he needs to work.
- Deepen the "silence of adoration before the infinite transcendence of God", without which "the call to holiness [cannot be] accepted [or] cultivated" (VC 38), as is consistent with the tradition of our community.
- Detach himself from the things of this world (*cf.* Lk 14:25-33), denying himself and taking up his cross in the footsteps of Christ (*cf.* Mt 16:24).
- Make a determined effort to correct any disordered tendencies in himself (active purification).
- Draw on the fraternal support and mutual emulation of community life.
- Regularly examine with his spiritual accompanier the areas in which he practices asceticism and establish a personal rhythm of penance[104].

101. CCC 1431.
102. *Cf.* Mt 4:1-11; 26:41; 17:21; Rm 12:1-2; 1 Cor 9:24-27; Heb 12:1-12.
103. *Cf.* Jn 15:1; Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, 5: "For the Lord was working with Antony – the Lord who for our sake took flesh and gave the body victory over the devil, so that all who truly fight can say (1 Corinthians 15:10), 'not I but the grace of God which was with me." [Translated by H. Ellershaw. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2811.htm>. Accessed 16.03.23]
104. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life* [*as applied to institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate*], 1983, Introduction no. 31, Norms 26-28; Potissimum Institutioni, nos 36-38. In addition to the traditional means of asceticism, brothers might find it fruitful to consider an asceticism adapted to the context of the world today (the digital world, etc.).

3. Practicing spiritual combat and the discernment of spirits

157. §1. Everyone experiences the struggle between darkness and light (*cf.* Jn 1:5; 3:17-21). By uniting ourselves to Christ victorious, we must learn to fight against our own illusions, concupiscence, and sin. Our confrontation with the spirit of the world and the devil is part of the battle fought by Christ; if we allow Christ to act in us, he shows himself to be the stronger and makes us victorious (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5).

§2. When engaging in spiritual combat, Saint John teaches us to practise the discernment of spirits (*cf.* 1 Jn 4, 1-6). This is both a gift of the Holy Spirit that we must ask for (*cf.* Jn 16, 8.11) and an art that we must acquire. It enables us to listen to God, to test what is in our heart, to discern the spirits that move it, and to discern the means we use to engage in spiritual combat. By learning to distinguish between a trial that comes from God's guidance and a temptation that comes from the devil, and from what is already the result of our consent to evil, we set out on a path to search our hearts with God and let him unmask the work of the evil one within us (*cf.* CCC 2847).

§3. To prepare for spiritual combat and practice the discernment of spirits, we recommend that each brother:

- Train to use the weapons the spiritual tradition of the Church puts at his disposal (*cf.* Eph 6:10).
- Practice interior watchfulness in order to guard the purity of his heart as the spiritual tradition proposes[105] and to examine his own works (*cf.* Gal 6:4).
- Distinguish between the different levels of his interiority (psychology, interiority of the spirit, theological life), and know how to distinguish recurring sins from possible psychological weaknesses.
- raw on the help of his brothers and those who accompany him, knowing that, left to his own devices, he risks a lack of lucidity; for he cannot compete alone with the wiles of the tempter.

4. Practicing mercy

158. §1. Like the woman caught in adultery (*cf.* Jn 8:1-11), it is possible for each and every one of us to have the foundational experience of being lifted up by Christ. His mercy reaches out to us in our bodily needs (*cf.* Jn 2:1-11; 4:46-5:14), our wounds, our ignorance, our estrangement from God (*cf.* Jn 3-4). In turn, if we want to remain in God's love, we know that it is necessary to "show compassion" toward our brothers (*cf.* 1 Jn 3:17) by acting like Jesus Christ, the Just One, who became our advocate (*cf.* 1 Jn 1:5-2:2). Every brother, having thus experienced mercy for himself, must become a witness to it for all the people he meets, transforming his thoughts and actions to conform them to those of God, doing what is right for each person, aware that God's justice is measured by his merciful love.

§2. To develop an appropriate and fervent practice of mercy, we recommend that each brother:

- Celebrate, contemplate, proclaim, and imitate God's mercy revealed in Christ's compassion[106].
- Practise the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy (*cf.* CCC 2447) with a view to converting his heart, his outlook, and his behaviour to the very ways of God.

105. St John Cassian, *Conferences XII*, "On Chastity".
106. *Cf.* Pope Francis, *Guadate et Exsultate*, 2018, no. 46.

- Act with wisdom, humility, and insight, taking care that he does not confuse the virtue of mercy with the passion of mercy[107] and that he acts in such a way that mercy does not oppose justice.

§3. Knowing that the last judgment will bear especially on the way in which we have shown mercy (*cf.* Mt 25:31-46), we pay special attention to this point and scrutinise our practice of mercy in our examination of conscience.

5. Finding support in spiritual accompaniment

159. §1. Given the importance of spiritual accompaniment, every brother should pray to receive the gift of a spiritual accompanier[108] in whom he can trust and take the time to develop criteria that will enable him to make a discerned choice of the right person for the task. Just as John was guided by John the Baptist to follow the Lamb, brothers must learn to make use of the support offered by their spiritual accompanier, so that they might discover the ways of the spiritual life, verify what they are hearing from the Lord, and receive help in discerning where God is leading them.

§2. In addition to the elements already specified in the first part of the Ratio, to ensure that his spiritual growth benefits from spiritual accompaniment, every brother will:

- Faithfully seek God's will, trusting that God, better than anyone else, knows what is really good for each person.
- Pray that the Lord, who is the master of his spiritual life, will grant him growth and that the person who accompanies him might, in this respect, be an instrument of God for him.
- Learn to open up regularly to the person who accompanies him, to question them, and learn to apply the insights received in concrete actions.

IV. BEARING FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

1. Unifying our lives around the Paschal Mystery of Christ

160. §1. We seek to place our whole being (desires, feelings, activities, history, passions, projects, etc.) under the light of Christ's cross and resurrection. It is the Paschal Mystery that introduces us into the communion of the triune God, liberates us from sin, and brings unity to our existence. When we accept this in truth, the various elements of our life gradually take their place and come together in a harmonious unity of which the Lord Jesus is the principle.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

---

107. *Cf.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 30, a. 3.
108. Translators note: Given the emphasis on accompaniment in this relationship, we have translated *accompagnateur* (or *accompagnatrice*) as "spiritual accompanier" or "person who offers spiritual accompaniment," rather than "spiritual director." This is already common practice in some quarters and is an attempt to shift the focus away from an over-emphasis on direction and the possible pitfalls that might entail. In practice, provided direction is given appropriately, the roles are synonymous.

- Seek to benefit from the liturgy, the sacraments, and the sacramentals, which, through the richness of their symbols, gestures, and texts, offer a concrete pedagogical means of entering into the Paschal Mystery with body, soul, and spirit.
- Interpret their own personal history and that of the community in light of the Paschal Mystery, the centre of both universal history and his own existence.
- Welcome the joy of Easter, which coexists with the reality of pain and suffering, but allows us to interpret everything from the perspective of Christian hope[109].
- Give substance to this mystery by completing in his own flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of his body, the Church (*cf.* Col 1:24), and by living Christian charity concretely as an expression of the new life received in Christ.

2. Reaching spiritual maturity and bearing fruit for the Church

161. §1. Our spiritual formation reaches its fullness in the progressive development of spiritual maturity. While aware of what needs to be purified, we accept reality as it presents itself, with its lights and shadows. The maturing of our spiritual life and the desire to maintain a true unity of life also lead us to love the place and time in which God has placed us. In this way, we seek to love the Church, our community, the world itself, and our lives as they are, and to bear fruit at the very heart of our poverty.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Welcome the humble reality of everyday life, recognising God's presence through his own imperfections.
- Look upon the world with hope, trusting in the prayer the Son offers up to the Father: "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one" (Jn 17:15).
- Embrace the Church with the faith of God's children, avoiding purely sociological or political interpretations of ecclesial life, making the Church's sufferings his own, and accepting the Church's slow growth.

3. Consecrating ourselves to God through Mary

162. §1. Obeying the word of Christ on the Cross, we receive Mary as our mother and take her into our home (*cf.* Jn 19:25-27). It is through her that we wish to consecrate to God all the dimensions of our being: our soul and our body, all that we possess and all that we accomplish. Mary is present at the beginning and at the end of our journey of faith and consecration[110], and she teaches us to do God's will and to obey his word (*cf.* Lk 1:38; Jn 2:5). Standing at the Cross, watchful in the hope of the resurrection, united to the apostles in calling forth the Spirit (*cf.* Acts 1:14), she teaches us to remain awake in the faith and to bear fruit as we await the coming of Jesus.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Invoke Mary, in particular by reciting and meditating on the rosary, so that she may educate his heart and guide him in his life of consecration and union with Christ.

---

109. *Cf.* Benedict XVI, "Year of Faith. How to speak about God?", *General Audience of 28 November 2012*.
110. On this point, see nos 19 and 99.

- Maintain a personal, tender, and gratuitous relationship with Mary, as with a mother, presenting with her, in trusting faith, his weaknesses and his successes to God[111].
- Frequently recite a prayer of consecration, like that of St Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, which the first brothers prayed on 8 December 1975.

4. Striving for holiness and awaiting the return of Christ

163. §1. We desire to "remain until Jesus comes" (*cf.* Jn 21:23) and are conscious that the ultimate unification of our existence will take place in the beatific vision; seeing God as He is, we will become like Him and reach the full measure of what we were created for (*cf.* 1 Jn 3:1-2). In the meantime, we must spend every day with the desire to become saints and await the final fulfilment of the Church in the Parousia, when everything will be purified, sanctified, and transfigured, and evil will be definitively destroyed (*cf.* Rev 21:4). The final destiny of humanity and creation does not leave us indifferent. As we await the re-creation, we seek to hasten the final coming of Jesus (*cf.* 2 Pet 3:12) and pray for the salvation of all humankind.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Draw inspiration from the attitude emphasised during Advent, joyfully commemorating the first coming of Christ, eagerly awaiting his final coming, and watching for the coming of Christ's grace at every moment so as to be more closely united to him.
- Make the Saints in heaven his friends who will help him in his search for holiness (*cf.* LG 51).
- Remember that enduring current tribulations with humility and trust is a sure way of participating in the definitive coming of the Kingdom (*cf.* Rev 1, 9).
- Ask for the grace of final perseverance (*cf.* CCC 2016) in the hope that Christ will help us to "remain" to the end (*cf.* Jn 21:22).

111. *Cf.* Benedict XVI, *Homily of 15 September 2008, at the Eucharistic Celebration for the Sick in Lourdes, France, on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows*: "to seek the smile of the Virgin Mary" belongs to those who have attained "spiritual maturity".

Chapter 8
HUMAN FORMATION

164. §1. Following Christ leads us to become more deeply human, for "only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light" (GS 22 §1). The growing maturity of our humanity should thus dispose us to reflect, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines out in the Son of God made man, and with singular effectiveness in his attitude toward others recounted in the Gospels.

§2. While promoting the just and necessary development of our humanity and the serene realisation of ourselves, human formation aims principally at helping us grow in the maturity of our free and loving response to God's call; it supports our vocation to lead a consecrated life of chastity, poverty, and obedience within the Church, rooted in fraternal communion and ordered to mission; it leads us to "mold [our] human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity" (PDV 43).

§3. There is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human maturity and religious maturity: human formation should help us to engage in a process of continuous conversion according to the specific values of our consecration; our human growth, however, has its own laws and cannot be reduced to spiritual formation. Because the community must be for every brother an environment that aids his human formation, this chapter must be read in close connection with the chapter on community formation. A foundation for human formation is also made in the study of philosophy and theology. By deepening our understanding of the meaning of life, we strengthen the foundations on which, with the help of grace, we develop our human maturity[112].

I. GROWTH AS AN AUTONOMOUS AND ADULT PERSON

1. Learning to know oneself

165. §1. The first path to be taken in human formation is the path to oneself[113]. Self-knowledge is a foundation of our formation, a necessary step on the road to maturity and holiness. We therefore seek to know ourselves based on our experiences and in light of God's love, which created and envelops us.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother[114]:

- Seek to gradually descend into ever deeper layers of his inner self, learning to identify the movements of his heart (behaviours, automatic reflexes, feelings, conscious and unconscious motivations).

112. *Cf.* Chapter 9, no. 215.
113. *Cf.* Cardinal Benjamin Stella, "La nouvelle *Ratio sacerdotalis* et la formation humaine à la vie consacrée", *Vie consacrées* 91, p. 37; see also p. 38: "The first task of human formation is to help the person come to know himself (...). Whoever wishes to live a consecrated life or be a priest must know their own worth, accept their weaknesses, learn to put a name to their emotions and feelings, recognise their needs and passions, and above all, come to be reconciled with their past, in both its riches and its wounds".
114. It is worth remembering that in this chapter, as in the whole of Part Two, this formula introduces suggestions for concrete ways of implementing the objective of formation prescribed in the first paragraph.

- Learn to recount the events of his life and to be able to take a step back and view them from a distance, so that he can look at his history in a reconciled way, taking into account both its riches and its wounds.

§3. At the same time, self-knowledge also develops through intellectual formation. By drawing on the findings of philosophy, the human sciences, and theological anthropology, we can discover man's nobility and vocation and put into perspective our own self-awareness.

2. Building healthy self-confidence and developing appropriate self-esteem

166. §1. We seek to acquire a sense of self-worth, to know how to speak about it simply, and to develop a legitimate love of self by learning to love ourselves without idolising ourselves, to accept ourselves without becoming complacent.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Consider the way those who are close to him and in whom he trusts perceive him, not being afraid to talk to them about himself, asking them about the way he is viewed and appreciated.
- Develop an appropriate taste for victory and the capacity to surpass himself when facing fears and taking risks.
- Undertake self-evaluation without comparing or devaluing himself, building on the positive experience of his successes and achievements, and analysing the reasons for his failures so that they become an opportunity to learn and grow
- Adjust his self-expectations by setting goals for growth that are both noble and achievable, while developing genuine patience with himself.
- Learn to rejoice in being himself, without egotism or pride, in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving.

3. Loving the truth

167. §1. Love of truth is a powerful driving force in our human formation: it gives us the courage not to flee from reality to illusion and impels us to work on ourselves by humbly accepting our own limitations; it sustains the uprightness of our heart and helps us to act according to our conscience in order to correspond to what God expects of us. We seek to develop a sincere love for truth, a quality that is indispensable for working on oneself, for the development of an authentic life, and for the fulfilment of the truth of who we are before God.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Seek to hear God's voice and to act according to the truth of his conscience.
- Seek to conform to God's plan for mankind, as revealed in his word.
- Work on being a trustworthy and loyal person, on whom others can rely, and who is able to listen to criticism and question himself.
- Seek to make respectful and objective judgments about people, events, and cultural models, with a healthy critical spirit.

- Develop—particularly through study—a "cult of truth," that is, "a kind of loving veneration [of] the truth, which leads one to recognize that the truth is not created or measured by man but is given to man as a gift by the supreme truth, God" (PDV 52).

4. Growing in personal autonomy

168. §1. One of the principal aims of human formation is to lead us to act as adult and autonomous persons. In this way, we seek to become more and more the subject of our own life.

§2. To acquire the foundations of autonomy, we recommend that each brother:

- Has a clear understanding of his primary needs and develops a healthy mastery of himself and his emotions.
- Seeks to think for himself, while learning from experience and respecting advice.
- Takes his life in hand, learning to decide what is his concern, and to look after himself.
- Work on becoming a stable, grounded person who can keep his commitments, integrate the reality of his surroundings, and set limits and rules for himself.
- Develop the prudence to put things in perspective, to interpret situations, to understand people, and to discern what needs to be done hic et nunc.
- Learn to envision the future.

II. WORK

1. Taking on the discipline of work as a consecrated person

169. §1. Whether manual work or intellectual work, external pastoral work or internal and moral work on ourselves, or even the work of prayer, we learn to accept work's constraints and as consecrated persons give it our all in a spirit of Christian charity.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Be enthusiastic about his work in a spirit of praise to the Creator, cooperating in the work of creation.
- Accept the toil of work as a form of asceticism and offer up his fatigue in order to unite himself to the work of the Son and the Father (*cf.* Jn 5:17).
- Choose to let his humanity be shaped by God through his work, and accept that his limits, resistances, and fears become apparent.

2. Developing a capacity for work

170. §1. Our way of life and our apostolate require that we become skilled and diligent workers, endowed with a sense of responsibility and a certain amount of endurance in our efforts. We try to love our daily work, developing perseverance and the desire to do well, but also simplicity and moderation.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Try to find the rhythm of work that suits him best and organise his time accordingly.
- Learn to plan ahead, to estimate the amount of work he can handle, and to set achievable goals before starting work.
- Develop a healthy level of self-esteem, based on a healthy sense of pride and sage humility.

§3. The contemporary world has developed techniques for work that a brother may wish to discern and adopt.

3. Developing skills and proficiency at work

171. §1. Skills and proficiency enable us to carry out our daily work with inventiveness, efficiency, and responsibility; they make our work more human and better conform to God's plan. In order to properly carry out the tasks entrusted to us, we seek to develop habitus, acquire a certain know-how, and learn new skills.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother learns to assess his true level of competency in the different areas in which he is involved and seek to develop it by either bringing his skills up to date or refreshing them. Brothers must know how to evaluate the need to develop skills in light of their own personal needs and the needs of the community, conscious of the fact that they cannot invest themselves fully or be fully competent in every area, distinguishing between a legitimate desire to acquire skills and an insatiable thirst for improvement.

4. Learning to work with others

172. §1. Our life in common and our missions lead, for the most part, to us working with others. Our formation should therefore enable us to learn to cooperate and engage with others in a common work. We must learn to respect each other's roles, to communicate cooperatively, and to discern each other's talents and needs in order to adjust to each other and complement each other in our work. If done with self-knowledge and relational virtue, working together can become a new experience of communion.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to communicate cooperatively by drawing inspiration from the techniques employed by businesses or the human sciences.
- Become capable of saying thank you, of making appropriate comments, and of offering encouragement.
- Examine whether he is ready to give up certain ideas in order to make room for others and collaborate with them.
- Learn the virtues of leadership and delegation in teamwork.

5. Working in a balanced way

173. §1. As we are often very busy, we should try to maintain a balanced rhythm of life, alternating between work, fraternity, prayer, and rest. We must learn to be fully invested in our work during the time devoted to it, while taking care not to extend the periods of work beyond what is necessary and not to make work our sole reason for living.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Ensure he does not neglect the quality of his working environment.
- Be fully invested in his work, while respecting the different dimensions of his religious life (fraternal life in common, the regularity and priority of prayer, etc.).
- Adopt a self-disciplined lifestyle, setting proper limits and guarding against the danger of over-activity by allocating only the time needed for the task, no more, no less (*cf.* 2 Thes 3:6-12).
- Learn to say no and to turn down certain tasks that would overburden him or cause him undue tension and stress.
- Set aside times during the day when he does not have to work, at least one work-free day in the week—when, for pastoral reasons, this is not possible on a Sunday [115]—and times of holiday during the year.

§3. The Community's role in contributing to the physical health of the brothers is to adopt a measured approach in assigning missions, offer the possibility of appropriate and proportionate work, offer brothers encouragement, and warn them of the danger of over-activity. In order to promote a balance between work and rest, brothers will, whenever possible, be provided with a room of their own in addition to their cell.

III. DEVELOPPING EMOTIONAL, SEXUAL, AND RELATIONAL MATURITY

174. Our ongoing human formation should lead us to a level of emotional maturity (1), sexual maturity (2), and maturity in our interpersonal relationships (3). Fundamentally, this means fostering maturity in our relationships with others and with ourselves.

1. Educating our emotional life

175. §1. In order to reach affective maturity, every brother must be able to develop real awareness of his emotion life, avoid behaviours or situations that could exacerbate tensions or endanger his fundamental needs, and give his emotions proportionate space, not letting himself be guided by them and acquiring their corresponding virtues. Virtues forge character, give facility in the practice of the good, and enable our affective life to flourish (*cf.* CCC 1810).

§2. To develop an understanding of his emotional world, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to name the movements in his heart (urges, emotions, feelings, desires), without condemnation or complacency, by seeking to discover why he is experiencing them.

115. *Cf.* Chapter 13, nos 347-348.

- "Manage" his character and become aware of what his behaviour elicits for himself and for others.
- Seek to discover in his personal, family, and cultural past, what lies beneath the way he feels, reacts, and relates to others, so that he can verify whether they are compatible with the Gospel.

§3. To avoid exacerbating tensions or jeopardising his basic needs, we recommend that each brother:

- Identify and take care of his basic needs so as to avoid putting himself under stress[116].
- Become more lucid about any wounds in his affectivity and any excessive behaviour (seduction, disproportionate expectations, repeated forgetfulness, self-absorption, narcissistic or provocative behaviour, aggressive speech in chapter or constant self-effacement, etc.), and work on discovering a path to healing.
- Distance himself from his instinctive or acquired needs (food, tobacco, alcohol, mobile phone / cell phone, tablet) and keep a lucid and watchful eye out for the possible development of addictions (internet, films, video games, news, social media).
- Develop a serene rhythm of life that alternates prayer, intellectual work, measured apostolate, relaxation, and fraternal time, in order to avoid burnout.

§4. For a brother who is seeking to integrate his emotional life in an appropriate way, we recommend that he:

- Accept that the vows require he undertake specific work on his affective life and basic needs[117], and that he put in place a corresponding framework for his life.
- Learn to accept his emotions and give them space without letting them overwhelm him, engaging their dynamism in the service of his consecrated life.
- Draw on the great traditions of human wisdom and the Christian teaching of the virtues, making judicious use of contemporary methods (coaching, behavioural psychology, systemics, etc.).

2. Giving sexuality its rightful place

176. Sexual maturity is reached primarily through the development of the virtue of chastity, which "means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being" (CCC 2337). Giving our sexuality its rightful place therefore implies: that we cultivate the integrity of our person in our bodily and spiritual dimensions; that we "manage" our sexuality and learn to integrate it into our person; that we open ourselves to spiritual fruitfulness.

a) Cultivating the integrity of our person

177. **§1.** We seek to develop a well-adjusted vision of sexuality, to cultivate the integrity of the forces of life and love that have been placed within us, and to develop an inner watchfulness for anything that might do us harm, especially anything that would fragment or weaken us.

116. On "basic needs," one can refer, for example, to Maslow's Pyramid: physiological needs, safety needs (physical and psychological), love and belonging, esteem, self-actualisation.
117. For more elements on this aspect, see Chapter 10 on the vows.

§2. In order to develop a well-adjusted vision of sexuality, we recommend that each brother:

- Develop a positive vision of sexuality according to God's plan for man and woman.
- Acquire a basic understanding of the structures, laws, and dynamics of sexuality (male and female), including the evolution of sexual drives at the different ages of life and the stages of the integration of sexuality that shape adulthood.
- Recognise the biological, passionate, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of sexuality, embrace them as a gift from God, and try to learn how they fit together.

§3. A brother who wants to strengthen his vigilance could find working on the following points helpful:

- Establishing a balanced rhythm of life and not creating such an overloaded schedule that he becomes structurally overwhelmed and weakened.
- Avoid ambiguous situations of seduction or flirtation; beware of being controlling or manipulative and of inappropriate gestures or words; use the internet and social media with discernment and be vigilant about what he looks at.
- Regularly check that his behaviour does not lead to a form of double life or double talk, which militate directly against the unity of life.
- Develop a basic knowledge of the frequent psycho-affective problems related to sexuality (sexual obsessions, masturbation, addiction to pornography, etc.) as well as the main types of psychological pathology that affect sexual life, learn how to identify them and who the competent people are who can help in their healing or treatment.

§4. Work on chastity must be adapted to the brother's culture of origin and place of assignment. There are very different ways of understanding bodily hygiene, respect for rules, closeness, manners, etc. Each brother will gradually become aware of the impact of his culture, family traditions, and acquired beliefs on his vision of sexuality, genitality, fertility, and the particular relationship he has with himself, with others, with his family, and with the community.

b) Managing our sexuality and integrating it into our person

178. §1. In order to integrate our sexuality chastely, we work to bring it under our direction by acknowledging and accepting its manifestations through our genitality, desires, and urges. This work is indispensable for those who want to direct their sexuality toward a sincere gift of self.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to put into words the projections, transference, urges, thoughts, and affective and relational needs that inhabit him, try to understand what they say about his deepest desires, and discover what is legitimate and what is inappropriate about them.
- Distance himself from the reflexes inherited from his family or local culture, from the subconscious dynamics that come from childhood, and from the habits acquired over the course of his past, in order to develop an inner space of freedom.
- Present to Christ his affective states and sexual desires, even the darkest of them, so that Christ can become Lord over them by purifying them.

§3. Given the opaqueness of the field of sexuality, it may be appropriate to occasionally seek professional advice (psychologists, therapists), even when no major problems have arisen. In the case of problems affecting sexual life, or compulsive behaviour, psychological accompaniment is an

essential means of moving forward. When a brother humbly opens up to his authorities, it is important that they support him in finding appropriate help.

c) Opening up to fruitfulness

179. §1. In order to open our life to being fruitful while living out our consecrated celibacy, every brother should try to discover the specific nature of masculine fecundity and accept the renunciation that consecrated celibacy entails as a means of proclaiming the coming Kingdom and developing fruitfulness of a spiritual nature. Every brother must progressively discover the impact of his sexuality on his religious and apostolic life and the way to integrate it into the full reality of his consecrated life.

§2. In addition to the means presented in Chapter 10 concerning the vow of chastity, it is important that every brother:

- Work to increasingly accept and integrate his masculinity as a life force given by God, which makes him capable of conquest, of making strong choices for the Gospel, in community or in mission. Constant effort to overcome the driven nature of our sexuality can be transformed into a creative drive in the various services and missions entrusted to us.
- Confront solitude and accept the feeling of lacking something on the affective level by learning to be alone before himself and before God, and little by little find the inner path that can transform the lack into an openness to that which surpasses him and gives life to the full.

§3. Each of us has built up a particular balance in our inner psychosexual world as a function of the history of our country, our family, and our personal experiences. It is therefore necessary for each brother to be able to identify the particularities of the psychosexual reality that inhabits him in order to be able to gain freedom and discern the aspects he needs to cultivate, so as to bear better fruit, and those which require the courageous choice to combat against.

3. Developing relational maturity

180. The proper integration of one's sexuality requires the development of relational maturity. For sexuality "affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and in a more general way the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others" (CCC 2332). Therefore, in order to build mature and adult relationships with others, we seek to: a) cultivate a well-adjusted sense of alterity, especially by integrating sexual alterity; b) develop chaste relationships; c) give meaning to our affectivity through service and the gift of ourselves.

a) Accepting our identity and integrating sexual alterity

181. §1. In order to enter into relationship with others, and especially with women, we must learn to recognise and accept our own sexual identity, to know what characterises a woman in her physiology, her psychology, and her mystery, and to welcome the richness of the complementarity between man and woman as well as the biblical sense of sexuality.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to integrate the specific contribution of women into his family, ecclesial, and apostolic relationships, through respectful cooperation in which each person is enriched by the complementarity of the other.

- Embrace the alterity of the sexes as a gift from God, without fear or flight, with clarity but not harshness.
- Acquire a discerned understanding of current gender issues and know how to come to a sound and fair position regarding homosexuality in conformity with the teaching of the word of God on the body, the couple, and sexuality.

§3. A brother who has homosexual tendencies will need to work to integrate his sexual orientation and desires into his journey of chaste continence and consecration to God.

b) Developing chaste relationships

182. §1. To be chaste "is not simply a sign of affection, but the summation of an attitude that is the opposite of possessiveness. Chastity is freedom from possessiveness in every sphere of one's life. (…) God himself loved humanity with a chaste love; he left us free even to go astray and set ourselves against him. The logic of love is always the logic of freedom[118]".

§2. We must therefore learn how to form bonds of communion with others by giving them their rightful place, and to grow in a chastity that guards our hearts and bodies, enabling our relationships to be just and to blossom into true love.

§3. To go further in this aspect, a brother should:

- Learn to put a framework in place for every encounter, especially when accompanying people, so that he can serve in the role to which he has been called and so that the other person can position themselves appropriately.
- Learn to be discreet when dealing with something intimate to another person, ensuring that his gaze, words, and initiatives are not intrusive].
- Maintain true inner poverty in his expectations of recognition.
- Learn to relate to women in a way that is both fully respectful and unequivocal (e.g. by avoiding a friendship that would create an expectation in either himself or herself that his vow of chastity would require he denounce).
- Actively seek out and welcome help from brothers or any trustworthy person with respect to "gestures, attitudes, or situations that make him vulnerable" (Dir 39.4), which he may not notice in his behaviour with the people he meets.
- Ensure that when he meets with people with homosexual tendencies, he respects them and looks at them through the lens of the Gospel, while remaining cautious never to leave the door open to ambiguous attitudes.

§4. The development of chaste relationships entails a commitment to fight against abuse. Every brother must ensure he is formed in the prevention of different types of abuse (controlling behaviour[119], spiritual abuse, abuse of authority, sexual abuse). The Congregation and each of the provinces has the responsibility to inform all the brothers about current directions given by the universal and local Church, as well as civil authorities, as regards the safeguarding of children, women, and vulnerable persons. In addition, the superiors of the Congregation will facilitate brothers' formation in matters relating to paedo-criminality, the damage caused by sexual abuse and abuse of other kinds, the local means of prevention, the means of safeguarding and help for those at risk, as well as punishments incurred.

118. Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*, no. 7.
119. Translator's note: "controlling behaviour" translates *phénomènes d'emprise*, following the English translation of Dom Dysmas de Lassus, *Abuses in the religious life and the path to healing* (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2023), p. 45, footnote 14: "The term used, emprise, has connotations of control as well as the exercise of influence and manipulation."

c) Serving others and giving of ourselves

183. §1. The authentic gift of our life for the sake of those we love (*cf.* Jn 15:13) requires the capacity to involve our whole person (mind, heart, and body) in the service of love. This gift is made by welcoming others and serving them. However, our gift of self must be an "authentic realization of self" (PDV 44) and not a flight from self or a loss of self. Our formation must therefore be able to provide the conditions for an authentic gift of self through the welcoming acceptance of others and through service.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to remain present to himself in his desire to give, paying attention to what he is going through interiorly and to what his needs, qualities, and limits are.
- Remain watchful that his gift of self is in harmony with his vows, vocation, and the Congregation's mission; but also, to a certain extent, in harmony with his health and life-balance. If he has any doubts about this, he should seek advice from those with authority and the necessary competence.

§3. Throughout our lives we renew this gift and make every effort to remain faithful to it. The work of forming our affectivity and our capacity for relationships reaches true maturity when we can become authentic witnesses to Christ's compassion. Attention to the other then unfolds when we truly accept and welcome them based on Christ's own love and respect. Because chastity and self-mastery are ordered to the gift of self, the profession of the counsel of chastity should enable every brother to "become a witness to his neighbor of God's fidelity and loving kindness" (CCC 2346).

IV. MATURING IN OUR RELATIONSHIP TO A GROUP

1. Acquiring relational and social virtues

184. §1. Given that our fraternal life and mission involve many interpersonal relationships, we must develop the virtues that pertain to relationships. Every brother must be capable of being sympathetic, willing to meet people with charity and respect, and maintaining adult relationships.

§2. In addition to the elements presented in the section on chastity, to go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Welcome the other person in his or her uniqueness, without trying to change them, accepting them with all their qualities, faults, and limitations.
- Cultivate empathy and develop goodwill toward people, desiring outright their good and their happiness, without, however, becoming intrusive.
- Learn to trust others, without being excessively naïve or immediately distrustful, but relying on the test of time.
- Learn to build reciprocal relationships in which each person can clearly express their specific needs, requests, questions, opinions, and thoughts.
- Accept misunderstandings and disagreements as part and parcel of a relationship, engaging in dialogue to clarify the situation.

2. Learning to live in a group

185. In addition to developing the ability to enter into relationship with people, human formation entails the acquisition of fundamental social virtues. Life in a group requires from each person the practice of justice, solidarity, the capacity to collaborate with others, a spirit of service, the sharing of responsibilities, and the acceptance of authority. It is based on each member's acceptance of the rules and community regulations, with a view to the common good. In addition, life in religious community requires its own specific initiation, which is presented in Chapter 11.

3. Developing right relationships with our families

186. §1. The development of right relationships with our family of origin plays a significant role in the ongoing growth of every religious. Our family history influences many areas of human formation: self-knowledge; emotional, sexual, and relational health; personal freedom; our ability to fit into a group, etc. The way in which we deal with our family relationships can have important repercussions on our consecrated life: community integration, vocational choice, the way we position ourselves in our vocation in relation to the world, etc. This entails work on our inner life that moves through the stages of re-reading our past, becoming aware of aspects we did not hitherto see, and journeying to reconciliation and recognition[120].

§2. We therefore seek to maintain an adult and appropriate relationship with our family and to integrate the influence of our family history into our journey of consecration and obedience to God.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Allow his affection for his family—especially his parents—to mature, and express his affection through prayer, correspondence, and visits.
- Develop a grateful heart towards his family for all the good he has received—including the seeds which God planted so that they may flourish in the consecrated life—and journey towards forgiveness and reconciliation for all that has been an obstacle to his human and Christian development.
- Seek a constructive and realistic way of maintaining family ties in harmony with his state as a religious.
- Re-read his family history in order to better understand how he fits into the religious family to which he now belongs.

4. Knowing one's own culture and learning to live interculturally

187. §1. The encounter between our own culture and that of others is an important experience in our common and apostolic life. The life of communion that we lead as brothers of different origins often leads to a positive experience of mutual knowledge, respect, esteem, and enrichment.

§2. Our formation should: enable every brother to journey toward a lucid acceptance of his own culture; ensure that our de facto "multicultural" common life progressively becomes one that is truly "intercultural"—that is, a community in which each member, without denying his own culture, learns to come out of himself and allows himself to be transformed by other cultures in order to become an artisan of the culture of the gospel; make us lucid about, and able to work on, our resistance to cultural openness when multicultural situations present themselves (*cf.* Appendix 5).

120. On our relationship with our families, see also Chapter 4, no. 84-c.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn a sufficient amount about his own culture so that he can involve his whole person in his consecration and enter into communication with other cultures in a positive way.
- B open to an evangelical and prophetic discernment about his own culture and those to which he is sent, so that he can position himself rightly in relation to them and undertake more fitting apostolic work.
- Prepare for an authentic encounter with another person when he accepts a mission which places him in a different culture.

§4. For its part, the Congregation will help every brother by:

- Affording him the concrete means of entering into the culture where he is sent (learning languages, putting him in contact with local people, advice, accompaniment in his first steps, etc.).
- Taking into account the specific anthropology of each culture in the formation and accompaniment of brothers in initial and ongoing formation.
- Encouraging the inculturation of the mission and of the expression of our charism in the priories of the Congregation.
- Providing concrete criteria and tools for dealing with global culture in a way that is compatible with local cultures (guidelines for the use of digital technology, reflection on the language of the contemporary world, access to new means of communication, etc.).

V. MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFE

1. Keeping in good shape

188. §1. Every brother should try to keep himself in as physically good shape as possible as an act of charity toward himself, performed with humility and thanksgiving for the bodily life God has given him. It is also a necessity for those who want to lead our kind of life, which is both contemplative and apostolic. We therefore try to take care of our health in an appropriate way, avoiding the extremes of complacency or excessive attention, and try to keep our body in good shape, disposed for prayer, the common life, and mission.

§2. In order to stay in good shape, a brother could:

- Develop good habits of personal hygiene and keep his living environment in good order;
- choose a healthy and balanced diet.
- Do at least a minimum of bodily exercise every day (walking, sport, exercises, etc.);
- relax with appropriate and balanced activities.
- Get into the habit of taking some evenings off to relax and ensure he is getting enough sleep.
- Avoid addictive habits: food, alcohol, tobacco, internet, etc.

§3. With trust in Providence, we serenely and responsibly accept any health problems that arise. An annual medical check-up (or at another suitable rate) is recommended for every brother.

2. Cultivating psychological balance

189. §1. Good mental health is required in order to give oneself consciously and in a lasting way to religious life and mission. In one way or another, everyone is confronted with the need to deal with difficulties that come from their environment of origin (trauma, family history, etc.), from stressful experiences (bereavement, loneliness, loss of reference points, etc.), or from destabilising situations (stress, strong emotions, etc.).

§2. In order to cultivate healthy psychological balance, we try to become aware of the psychological part of our inner world (conscious and unconscious mechanisms, reactions, decisions, etc.) and to develop balanced, adult, and generally positive behaviours.

§3. To work on his interior world, we recommend that each brother:

- Use his self-awareness and an accompanied re-reading of his experiences to gain access to areas in himself of which he is not overly conscious.
- Become aware of the false beliefs he holds about himself and the false images he has of himself that may be holding him back and seek to gain an increasingly more accurate self-image.
- Know his temperament and identify the characteristics that stem from it: his talents, so that he can make the most of them; his weaknesses, so that he can be vigilant about them.
- Consider his personal life story, become aware of its impact on his daily life, and benefit from the results in order to write the sacred narrative of his life.

§4. To work on finding behavioural balance, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to give his emotions their rightful place.
- Ensure he has a space where he can talk about himself and say whether he is doing well or is struggling.
- Identify people who provide him with a non-judgmental space where he feels free from the imprisonment of false taboos.
- Identify attitudes that are typically brought about by his emotions, as well as defence mechanisms or avoidance strategies he puts in place to avoid confronting whatever is causing him pain.

§5. Brothers must accept the disruption that comes from a healthy otherness[121] and be ready to take advantage of the opportunities presented by life's circumstances to move forward. When confronting each of the challenges of human formation and in all the levels of a person's growth, occasional or regular accompaniment by a therapist may be beneficial or even necessary.

§6. For its part, every priory will ensure it does the following:

- Avoid creating living conditions which, on a structural level, place the brothers in a situation of stress.

121. Translator's note: "otherness" here translates "altérité" and has nothing to do with the pejorative sense of "otherness" or "othering."

- Provide the time necessary for every brother to reach psychological balance.
- Ensure fair and appropriate access to psychological care (financial means, confidentiality, balanced discourse on psychology, etc.).
- Build a healthy fraternal atmosphere and real community friendship that will provide brothers with a living environment that fosters human balance (*cf.* Chapter 11).

3. Integrating intellectual and cultural life

190. §1. A well-balanced life takes into account the intellectual and cultural dimension of our person. To foster well-rounded, integral health, we must take time for the life of the mind, and develop our general culture based on a healthy intellectual curiosity. To renounce any kind of regular intellectual activity is to run the risk of developing "a sense of marginalisation and inferiority, or encouraging superficiality and rash initiatives" (VC 98).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Ensure he always has something to read (intellectual, cultural, or spiritual).
- Regularly choose an area of general culture and increase his knowledge in it (history, the arts, geography, the sciences, etc.).
- Practice an art or craft in his spare time that will foster human and cultural balance.

§3. Each community fosters a level of culture through the judicious choice of readings at table, films watched together, cultural outings, and discussions had together. The community will provide a sufficient annual budget for such cultural activities together.

4. Cultivating the joy of life

191. §1. The joy of life is a gift from God as well as a daily choice to be cultivated. We unhesitatingly promote such occasions that bring us inward and outward joy. We learn to welcome the present moment—which means embracing reality and accepting ourselves—as a gift. The desire to feel joy and to be accepted and loved in our present self are not vain narcissistic aspirations; they express the need each of us has for a positive sense of self and are an important basis for a life that is continually given.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Cultivate the small joys of daily life.
- Acquire the virtue of self-humour, so that he can face life with a positive attitude.
- Make his daily life a place of thanksgiving and celebration.
- Create opportunities for celebration and take time out with his brothers and those close to him with no ulterior motive or task in mind.

VI. FORMING OUR FREEDOM AND FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

1. Working towards becoming free

192. §1. The formation of our freedom must enable us to: free ourselves, with the help of God's grace, from what hinders and enslaves us; take possession of our freedom, bringing together the necessary conditions to make a free choice; commit to an authentic, open, and generous gift of our person.

§2. To undertake this journey of freedom, we recommend that each brother:

- Discover the truth of his own self in the light of God's gaze, identify the areas within him that are enslaved, and make the choice to turn away from what is holding him back.
- Accept that the path of liberation is laborious, that it requires much humility, and that growth in one's freedom coexists with certain obstacles.
- Ask for the grace of freedom while continuing to work on himself.
- Learn to see his failures, lack of freedom, and wounds as part of a story in which God is the Lord and Saviour.

§3. To learn how to bring together the necessary conditions for a free choice, we recommend that each brother:

- Work on accessing his interiority and become aware of any internal pressures (guilt, self-consciousness, vanity, etc.) or external pressures (social pressure, sense of urgency, manipulation, etc.) that might be weighing on him.
- Try to emerge from his self-enclosed world, identifying his narrowness of vision, feelings, and thought, and dare to explore what is given in the outside world.
- Serenely integrate the objective constraints of his choices and cultivate the necessary condition of peace for any important decision.
- Accept the renunciation inherent in any choice and obey his conscience.

§4. In order to engage his freedom in the gift of self, we recommend that each brother:

- Discover that he is a unique subject of God's choice and a person destined to the freedom of the children of God.
- Find an anchor in the life choice he has already made and renew that choice.
- Assume the role of being the primary one responsible for his initial and ongoing formation.

§5. The advice of someone wise is very useful in the evaluation of our choices, in becoming aware of the mechanisms at play in us, and in readjusting our decisions, as is sometimes necessary. Such external help is a judicious means of preventing the danger of becoming self-referential. Priories will help to establish a climate of freedom by creating spaces in which there can be free speech and by encouraging parrhèsia.

2. Taking responsibility for our actions

193. §1. We seek to be able to justly discern the moral responsibility that falls to us in different situations and to take ownership of our actions in a mature and appropriate way.

§2. To develop a sense of responsibility, we recommend that each brother:

- Recognise that he is the author of his actions and know how to account for them, without, however, completely identifying himself with them.
- Be able to define the framework of his responsibility in reference to what was asked of him, his moral actions, civil and religious laws, and the natural law.
- Keep his promises, fulfil his obligations, and commit to carrying out his daily duties without waiting for the context or other people to force him to do so.
- Take into account what seems outside of his power but nevertheless falls under his responsibility.
- Acknowledge his failings by asking for forgiveness and making the necessary reparations.

3. Forming our conscience

194. §1. Our conscience is the inner sanctuary where God speaks to our soul, urging us to do good and avoid evil; where we are guided by the confirmations and reproaches of our Creator; where we hear God calling us to make the right decisions and sound judgments about the situations and people we encounter. We should therefore form and follow our conscience in order to obey God's law and offer a free and loving response when he calls us.

§2. To form and act according to his conscience, we recommend that each brother:

- Descend into the sanctuary of his conscience and go over his day in order to hear God's voice unveil his divine gaze upon the brother's actions and experience.
- Seek the help of his accompanier to familiarise himself with the voice of his conscience and deepen his spiritual discernment over the long-term.
- Illuminate his conscience by:
  - Reading Scripture and listening to the teaching of the Church on current moral issues.
  - Following courses on dogmatic theology that provide basic references to God's plan of salvation for humanity.
  - Following courses in ethical philosophy and moral theology that enable him to reflect on the morality of human acts, whether they are good or bad.

§3. Forming our conscience should lead us to respect the conscience of others. The more contact we have with this inner sanctuary, the more we realise that everyone has the right to be respected in their conscience and their freedom. Likewise, we must make sure our lives do not offend other people's conscience through bad example, especially the young and vulnerable (*cf.* 1 Cor 8:12).

VII. ACQUIRING WISE GOOD SENSE

1. Learning from experience

195. §1. Experience plays an essential role in human formation. Indeed, it is first and foremost life itself that leads us to maturity. This is why we seek to develop a readiness to learn from life, the capacity to re-evaluate our practices, and trust in the daily action of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Not every experience is necessarily formative; rather, it becomes so when it is accompanied by an awareness of the experience and the capacity to put it into words, and when we can integrate it into our path of holiness.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Embrace life as it is, welcoming reality with all its lumps and bumps and situations both happy and difficult.
- Listen to events and to the testimony and advice of elders—when it is the expression of wisdom acquired over the years—and allow himself to be challenged.
- Make use of the virtue of prudence, which enables him to draw on his experience and the experience of others, so that he might live through similar experiences in a fruitful way.

2. Coming to a mature vision of man and life

196. §1. Human formation should enable us to become aware of the vision we have of existence, ourselves, and the world, which we have inferred from daily life, our education, our culture, or the witness given by others. Brothers must give themselves the necessary space to allow their vision to evolve and seek to evangelise their vision so that their lives correspond to God's plan for them.

§2. The deepening of our vision involves the discovery of the inner world we inherited from our past; we bear within us loyalties, beliefs, life scenarios, and conceptions that govern us without our realising it. To come to maturity, we must work to embrace these aspects, with all their richness, shortcomings, and excesses; we must try to purify them so that they become increasingly conformed to the reality of who we are and God's intention for us.

§3.Even though the maturing of our concepts does not take place at the theoretical level alone, theological anthropology, philosophy, and psychology nevertheless make an indispensable contribution to our personal development and self-understanding.

§4. By teaching us from experience, philosophical realism offers an approach that can be a valuable aid to our human growth: it makes us attentive to the events of our lives as well as to our inner world and enables us to examine them from a perspective that lays claim to the universal[122].

3. Integrating fragility and weakness

197. §1. Our work of human maturation must enable us to integrate our fragilities and weaknesses into our person. Confrontation with failure and difficulties leads us to a transformation of our perceptions, a purification of our idealism, and to a greater acceptance of ourselves. The driving force of our growth

122. See Chapter 9, no. 211 §3-4.

in this area is found in an encounter with God's mercy. Partaking of the sacrament of reconciliation and spiritual accompaniment play an essential role in this experience.

§2. Time shows us that some of life's trials, which once seemed insurmountable, can in fact help us to grow in maturity. The experience of suffering, disappointment, and grief initiate a complex and destabilising process that takes time and does not necessarily come to a resolution. When we come to peacefully accept this, then, with the Lord's grace, the experience of desolation can become an opportunity for growth.

§3. Sometimes we find it difficult to realise that we have an area of weakness or fragility, and we risk becoming closed in on ourselves and rigid. When faced with this situation, fraternal friendship can be a real help. A respectful and courageous word from a brother can help bring us out of our self-perception and help us to believe that God is working on us at the very heart of our poverty. A brother who accepts his own weakness with clarity and confidence is being made more able to become merciful like Christ.

4. Acquiring a spirit of serenity

198. §1. Wise good sense is also expressed in the peace and serenity that result from a journey of unification and simplification in our life. We must seek this peace and work to keep it: "Seek peace, and pursue it" (Ps 34:14). A brother must be able to spread serenity around him, even in moments of difficulty. In every circumstance, he must be able to bear witness, even through his fragility, to the beauty of a human life lived with God.

§2. A brother who seeks to go further in this aspect can find inspiration in the advice of John XXIII[123]:

- Only for today, I will seek to live the livelong day positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.
- Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will be courteous in my behaviour; I will not criticize anyone; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.
- Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.
- Only for today, I will adapt to circumstances, without requiring all circumstances to be adapted to my own wishes.
- Only for today, I will devote 10 minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
- Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.
- Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.
- Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.
- Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good Providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world.
- Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness. Indeed, for 12 hours I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.

123. "The Daily Decalogue of Pope John XXIII", https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/card-bertone/2006/documents/rc_seg-st_20061011_john-xxiii_en.html (accessed 25.03.23).

Chapter 9
INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

199. **§1.** The prayer of Jesus asking his Father that we be "consecrated in the truth" (*cf.* Jn 17:1-19) resonates in our hearts as a calling. We discern a constitutive element of our vocation to be a specific call from Christ to seek the truth, to live by it, and to witness to it. Whilst on earth, this quest for truth is experienced essentially as an ever-deepening thirst (*cf.* VC 98); it will come to fulfilment in the beatifying vision of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

§2. To cooperate with this calling, we consecrate our intelligence to God, which means "offering Jesus our whole person, allowing him to sanctify us in all our capacities: affective, intellectual and moral, and seeking the truth in all areas of our lives, from study to community life and apostolate" (GC 2022, Ch.). This orientation outlines for us a path of "holiness in truth," which envelops intellectual formation and goes beyond it.

I. CONSECRATING OUR INTELLIGENCE TO GOD

1. Centring our intelligence on God

200. **§1.** Conscious of the truth, light, and beauty of God, we want to place him at the centre of our lives. This not only entails turning our heart to him, but also devoting the resources of our intellect to knowing him, to recognising his presence in all things, and to making him known to all those whom we meet.

§2. Our intellect becomes fully itself when it is directed toward the First Truth (*cf.* GS 15). We believe that our heart and intellect are radically made for God. Through philosophical study, this truth progressively becomes a certainty of our reason.

§3. We seek to love God so that we might know him and to know him so that we might better love him—for "love (…) is ever desirous of a better knowledge of the beloved."[124] When we encounter God, knowledge and love unite, and we are led to the total gift of ourselves.

2. Converting our minds to Christ, the Wisdom of God

201. **§1.** Intellectual formation should lead us to discover that Christ, the truth and wisdom of God, is the highest light that illuminates our entire intellectual search. We recognise in the wisdom of the Cross the ultimate key to interpreting the meaning of existence (*cf.* FR 23). We work for the conversion of our minds by taking Christ as the ultimate criterion in our search for truth, for he himself is "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

§2. In order to make Christ, especially in his Paschal Mystery, the ultimate criterion in his search for truth, we recommend that each brother:

---

124. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, no. 7.

- Open his conscience to the light of Christ by constantly seeking the true good when he acts and by conforming his life to the life of Christ.
- Keep Christ as the goal of all his intellectual pursuits, even when he reflects on questions that do not directly concern the faith.
- Seek to make his interactions with others an opportunity for them to encounter Christ.

3. Desiring the gift of wisdom from the Holy Spirit

202. §1. It is the Holy Spirit who enables human knowledge to mature into true wisdom (*cf*. FR 44). All our intellectual formation must therefore prepare us to enter into the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit, given by God not to the learned but to the little ones.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Engage with philosophy and theology as "two (...) complementary forms of wisdom" (FR 44), which can make the desire for God grow in us and prepare us to live by the Holy Spirit's gift of wisdom.
- Make his studies a means of being introduced spiritually, intellectually, and existentially into the heart of the kerygma and of coming, under the breath of the Holy Spirit, to the contemplation of God who gives himself in his Son.
- Begin and end every intellectual pursuit in prayer, weighing up what he has learned in order to integrate what he judges to be good into the principles that enlighten his conscience and govern his life.
- Study in the presence of God, seeking to make his intellectual inquiry a path of ongoing prayer.

4. Seeking the truth in all things

203. §1 Our daily search for truth unfolds through dialogue with God in prayer, obedience to God's commandments and to our own conscience, intellectual inquiry and study, common sense in everyday life, listening and dialogue with others, artistic pursuit, work well done, and apostolic concern. We want to seek the truth in all things, learning to love it, to deepen our knowledge of it, and to take it as the guide for our lives.

§2. Our apprenticeship to a life devoted to the truth therefore entails that we seek to be true in our knowledge, our speech, and our relationships with others; that we are ready to conform our lives to the truth that comes from God; that we love the truth more than our own understanding; that we are aware that the truth always surpasses us and that we do not try to possess it.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Seek the truth wherever it manifests itself.
- Work with others so that they complement his perception and help him to avoid self-justification.
- Give priority to truth over his own comfort.
- Take a step back from the truths he has discovered to maintain inner spiritual liberty.

- Adopt an attitude of inquiry that does not stop at what is already possessed.
- Learn to let go of what appears to be obvious if he sees the truth is not to be found there.

II. COMITTMENT TO STUDY

1. Marvelling at reality and opening ourselves to its questions

204. §1. Our life of study, undertaken within a realistic perspective, should foster in us a humble attitude of openness to and acceptance of reality—whether it be the mystery of God who gives himself, or an everyday reality that presents itself to be known.

§2. Our intellectual formation should develop in us a talent for observation that is the starting point of our questioning. By paying attention to qualities and differences, we seek to foster wonderment and admiration—fundamental attitudes that stimulate our desire to know and initiate the questioning that will drive our intellectual inquiry. A question is only alive in us if it actually sets us in search of an answer, and so we must learn to question the reality around us assiduously and methodologically. By working to clarify a question, we are already on the road to an answer.

§3. Whilst questioning reality, we must also allow ourselves to be questioned by it, that is, to be challenged by reality. Reality itself becomes the guide for our inquiry, and we should be prepared to find our certainties become unstuck by the aspect of truth that our study enables us to approach. The answer to a question can also consist of new questions.

2. Initiating inquiry and acquiring the habits of work

205. §1. Study should gradually develop in us a spirit of inquiry. Inquiry enables us to order our thinking, update and deepen our knowledge, explore new horizons and open our minds, and grow in the maturity of our understanding of the meaning of life. Our religious life impels us to constantly inquire about God; it prompts us to engage our minds in exploring the sources and consequences of our faith.

§2. In practical terms, engaging in intellectual inquiry means:

- Getting down to work, devoting time to it, and persevering in it.
- Progressively readjusting one's subject by clarifying the problematic at issue and the angle of approach.
- Taking interest in what other researchers in the same area have said before and collating their responses.
- Identifying the tensions between possible answers, evaluating them, and identifying the places where you must dig deeper.
- Trusting your intuition, while remaining alert to your own blind spots.
- Writing down your discoveries and the path that led to them, so that you can compare your thoughts in dialogue with others.
- Maintaining a sense of the limits of the truths reached and a desire to continue to develop our inquiry.

§3. Becoming autonomous in our intellectual work is necessary if we are to keep inquiring throughout our lives. Depending on the subject and the type of inquiry involved, every brother should find the resources best suited to him (articles in specialist journals, monographs, popular works, magazines, videos, etc.). There are many things that can become a resource to nourish our questioning and keep us engaged in inquiry; whatever the chosen medium, the quality of attention we give and its connection with the question we have are the driving forces that enable our reflection to bear fruit.

206. §1. Intellectual work is a path of personal asceticism (*cf.* VC 98) which leads to the joy of discovering the truth and being able to share it. To set out on an inquiry is at once a desire, a task, and an effort. We want to develop a tenacity in study and acquire the necessary habits of someone engaged in intellectual work.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Persevere in study, despite obstacles and discouragement, knowing that discovery often comes after much effort.
- Seek to acquire the virtues and "good habits" of someone engaged in intellectual work:
  - Intellectual honesty
  - A good use of time and available resources
  - The ability to concentrate
  - The art of taking notes so that work can be used again at a later date
  - A grasp of analysis and a method adapted to the subject to be worked on
  - The ability to plan work (putting it in order, estimating time needed, scheduling reading)
  - The discipline of writing down thoughts in order to clarify them and give them better expression
  - A determination to share thoughts with others (in the form of a homily, article, teaching, brochure, book, video, etc.)

§3. By developing these habits of work, we gradually acquire intellectual habitus in the areas in which we are working. These support our work by making it more precise, quicker, and easier.

3. Learning to listen to and think with others

207. §1. Intellectual work naturally leads us to enter into discussion with other thinkers and schools of thought. This dialogue requires sincere interest and attentive listening, the ability to identify and clearly reformulate the thoughts of those we are talking to, the conviction that it is always possible to learn from others, the ability to recognise and accept disagreement, the ability to express one's own opinion, and a spirit of constructive criticism.

§2. Developing the ability to think with others contributes to the health and balance of our intellectual work. This requires a learning process in which each person becomes able to:

- Make space for what others think.
- Open up to new questions.
- Identify where points of view clash and where they complement one another.
- Not force these points of view into unity but maintain the tensions that can help us get closer to the truth.

§3. Discussing with others often enables us to relate our intellectual inquiry more directly to our lives; the fruits of our work can then illuminate our conscience and enable us to deepen or question the certainties on which we base our lives. We are also convinced that seeking the truth with others can become a missionary pathway, a way to enter together into communion with Christ.

§4. The modern intercultural context and the complexity of contemporary questions and situations make it all the more important that we be able to reflect with others, bring our different perspectives into dialogue, and develop interdisciplinary inquiry. To this end, we recommend that each brother:

- Willingly enter into conversation with men and women from all walks of life and every culture.
- Maintain curiosity about areas of thought other than his own.
- Take part in conferences and read journals or books in other disciplines than the one in which he works.
- Allow himself to be challenged by the questions of contemporary thinkers.

4. Getting involved in study projects

208. §1. Study is a constituent part of our vocation. We therefore try to maintain regular time for study in our schedules, whatever our stage of life.

§2. Making good use of the time set aside for study amid the many activities of life in a priory requires us to be able to intelligently select the topics we work on, take advice, and know when we sometimes have to give up other commitments. Every brother must be aware of the way in which intellectual work and study nourish him and impact his life. Through study, every brother gradually develops a personal synthesis which unites the different elements he has learnt ever since childhood, the teaching he has received, his personal reading and reflection, aspects of his culture of origin, the discoveries of life, etc.

§3. Ongoing intellectual formation should include among its priorities implementing the means necessary for personal lectio divina that is nourishing, deepening our understanding of our vocation, and contributing to the unification of our personal life.

§4. Dialogue with the people we meet in our apostolic life is a constant source of questioning, challenge, and discovery. When we take the time to reflect on these encounters and integrate what they have taught us, they help maintain a dynamic attitude in us, enrich our thinking, allow us to reconsider the way we live, and keep us in step with the times. Fraternal life, the experience of prayer, and the needs of liturgical life can also stimulate our inquiry and motivate us in our ongoing intellectual formation.

§5. The first thing a brother can do is to identify the areas he wants to study and develop in light of his personal interests, the needs of the community, and the needs of his mission. He must bear in mind that his study will not be fruitful if he does not have a personal work schedule, a reading plan, or make an effort to write (homilies, articles, publications, etc.).

§6. Sometimes study can become a trial for a brother because he no longer has the strength to do it or has lost the taste for it. When a brother wants to breathe new life into his intellectual formation after a long pause, he could make a start by:

- Setting a time in the week for personal intellectual work and remaining faithful to it.
- Asking a few brothers with whom he is close what the best book is they have read in the past five years, and then really apply himself to reading it.

- Starting with questions that come up repeatedly in conversation, make a list of the resources that could be used to answer them (experiences, concepts, passages from the word of God, examples from the saints, etc.) and then reflect on how to enrich the answers already found.

§7. The Director Provincial of Formation plays an important role in motivating brothers in their ongoing intellectual formation and helping them to get organised. He also tries to put in place the means for brothers to reflect on the elements needed to lead a consecrated and missionary life in the world today (*cf.* IMF 15).

III. ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON

1. Working to acquire the science of theology and philosophy

209. The concrete pedagogy of theological and philosophical formation is presented in detail in the ratio studiorum.

a) Discovering theology as listening to and proclaiming the word of God

210. **§1.** By teaching us to listen to the word of God within the Tradition of the Church, theology plays an essential role in our integral formation. In order for the study of Sacred Scripture to be the soul of our theological formation (*cf.* DV 24), we devote time to the study of biblical theology and exegesis. This study resonates with our daily lectio divina and our listening to the word of God in contemplative prayer and the liturgy.[125] We must ensure that our intellectual reflection and our spiritual life are able to collaborate in the deepening of our faith.

§2. Theology develops the capacity of our intellect to receive the faith of the Church (auditus fidei) and to shed light on its content for ourselves and for others (intellectus fidei). It teaches us to "[scrutinize] the signs of the times and [interpret] them in the light of the Gospel" (*cf.* GS 4); it helps us to detect God's presence in His creation and His action in the heart of man. It is an essential way of reaching out to people today as it sets out the expression of faith in a way that is relevant to the contemporary world. Theological reflection stimulates and supports our missionary action, which often takes the form of preaching or teaching.

§3. Theological study teaches us to think in connection with the Tradition, the magisterium, and the community of the faithful, and thus roots our sense of communion. We experience a form of collaborative understanding which results from the synodal aspect of the Church and the dialogical dimension of faith.

b) Discovering philosophy as a search for the "what" and the "why" of things

211. **§1.** Philosophy, in dialogue with theology, holds an important place in the formation of the Brothers of Saint John. It is the first secular discipline that asks the question of God and seeks an answer, attentive to move from "phenomenon to foundation" (FR 83), thus tending towards a sapiential vision of man based on experience. Philosophy teaches us to inquire into the nature and meaning of things. It prompts us to ask questions and to allow ourselves to be questioned, to seek an order in reality and to draw the consequences for speculative and practical reflection. It aims to deepen the correspondence

125. *Cf.* no. 218.

(adequatio) between our thought and reality. When it is oriented in the right direction, philosophy restores man's confidence in his ability to reach truth, including in its metaphysical dimension.

§2. By questioning human existence, the philosophical approach highlights the places in which man is waiting to be reached by the saving grace of Christ. It plays a key role in the dialogue between faith and human reason (*cf.* FR 81-84) and contributes to the evangelisation of contemporary culture marked by the sciences. Our intellectual formation must therefore enable us to enter into conversation with the human sciences (history, sociology, psychology, etc.) and to allow ourselves to be questioned by the progress and investigations of the positive sciences.

§3. Thanks to its sense of the universal, philosophy teaches us to be open to others and to the world. In connection with other disciplines, such as history, it develops a sense of analogy that enables us to embrace human experience in all its diversity and complexity. In this way, it draws on the diversity of human cultures to deepen our understanding of man. It constantly leads us to question and better understand today's world, with its greatness and its misery. It nourishes our respect and admiration for all creatures.

§4. Because philosophy takes interest in the whole spectrum of human activity, it helps brothers to cultivate in everything they undertake the desire to understand the meaning of life and to grow in the maturity of their humanity. Philosophy is more than just knowledge; it must lead us to a certain wisdom of life. By drawing inspiration from the practice of philosophers, brothers will be able to move towards such wisdom of life, in an openness to the thinking of others, maintaining a critical eye, taking time to listen to reality, and being rooted in self-knowledge.

c) Learning from the masters

212. §1. In its initial phase, our intellectual formation is concerned above all with knowledge of the word of God, founded on the living Tradition of the Church and on an exegesis (patristic, canonical, and scientific) that enables us to grasp the literal sense. The writings of St John, placed within the perspective of the Holy Scriptures as a whole, occupy a central place in this formation.

§2. Our study is based in a privileged way on Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas, two authors whose depth of analysis and breadth of inquiry enable those new to philosophy and theology to structure their thought and more favourably penetrate the word of God and the theological tradition.

§3. Our formation also aims to provide knowledge of and an appreciation for the teaching of the Fathers of the Church. "The fathers are privileged witnesses of tradition", "have passed down to us a theological method that is both enlightened and reliable"; and "their writings offer cultural, spiritual and apostolic richness that makes them great teachers of the church yesterday and today."[126]

§4. On this basis, our formation can also extend to the study of great thinkers, both ancient and contemporary, and be open to approaches from a variety of cultures.

2. Bringing faith and reason into dialogue

213. §1. We seek to engage in the dialogue between faith and reason, conscious that they are like "two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth" (FR 1). For us, this dialogue mostly consists in exploring how philosophy and theology relate to one another, with an openness to the modern sciences. In sum, we believe so that we may better understand, and understand so that we may better believe.

126. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Fathers of the Church in the Formation of Priests*, 1989, no. 17.

§2. For such a dialogue to be fruitful, we need to:

- Recognise that each of the sciences has its own proper identity and autonomy, while being clear about their mutual limitations.
- Allow reason to question our certainties of faith.
- Believe that God answers human aporia and illuminates reasons' questions with an even greater light.
- Recognise that Revelation is the summit and fulfilment of all the sciences.

3. Serving the Church through an apostolate of human and Christian formation

214. §1. Our commitment to serving the dialogue between faith and reason is made concrete in our apostolic life by providing human and Christian formation. That is why, in all our apostolates, we offer, in a way appropriate to the setting, formation in the field of philosophy, theology, and the spiritual life,[127] and seek to take part in the "diakonia of truth"—a service the Church wishes to offer in the world of today, including to the poorest. Whatever our activities, we want to be attentive to the humanity of the people to whom we are sent and to lead each person, directly or indirectly, to Christ who is the Truth.

§2. Our intellectual formation should therefore enable us to provide Christians with a formation that answers their questions about the meaning of life and about encountering Christ, giving special consideration to the poor; it should enable us to be attentive to non-believers who are thirsty for formation and to offer them philosophical formation, aware that "philosophy is (...) irreplaceable for the encounter and dialogue between believers and unbelievers"[128]; it should also enable us to give reasons for the Gospel to those who do not have, or who no longer have, the faith, and to enter into a dialogue that will enable them to remove any obstacles on their path to encountering Christ.

§3. To go further in this aspect and to act as servants of the truth, we recommend that each brother:

- Develop appropriate teaching methods for each subject and audience.
- Place importance on peoples' growth, respecting their situation, and checking whether our formation is having an impact on them.
- Teach and preach with humility, aware of his own limitations, seeking the truth with people.
- Encourage dialogue with other speakers and cooperation with other institutes (*cf.* GC 2019).

IV. SEEKING TRUTH FOR THE SAKE OF CHARITY

1. Integrating the intellectual dimension into the development of our person

215. §1. Convinced that the life of the intellect, and in particular an inquiring attitude, contributes to the fulfilment and radiance of human life, we believe that intellectual formation plays an important

127. *Cf.* Chapter 1, no. 23.
128. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Study of Philosophy in Seminaries*, 1972.

role in human formation. Intellectual formation must enable us to develop our capacity to reflect and to seek the truth, and to integrate the truth into our integral growth in maturity.

§2. Our personal search for the meaning of life draws on the vision that philosophy and theology give us of the mystery of God and the human condition. If cultivated with perseverance, study can be a real help in times of crisis and questioning in our lives.

§3. Intellectual work instils in us virtues that contribute to the development of our human maturity: perseverance in inquiry, the ability to structure and express our thinking, freedom of thought, critical distance from our own thinking, respectful listening to others and taking their thoughts into account, etc. In turn, human formation contributes to the uprightness of intellectual life and to its flourishing, sheltered from the pitfalls it can encounter: subjectivism, refusal to confront the opinions of others, flight from reality into concepts, vain superficiality, lies, pretensions to a totalising vision, etc.[129]

2. Working towards a coherent life

216. §1. Intellectual formation must not confine us to an "abstract intellectualism" (*cf.* VC 98), but help us to grow as men, Christians, and consecrated persons, in a way that is coherent with the life of prayer and contemplation to which we are called.

§2. Our intellectual formation must contribute to the unity of life demanded for religious by the Council (*cf.* PC 18). When St John exhorts us to "walk in the light" (*cf.* 1 Jn 1:7), he invites us to develop a life that is consistent with the Gospel. In our intellectual life, this requires the uprightness and humility of heart necessary to seek the divine light, as well as the ability to teach or preach without being intellectually controlling or manipulative,[130] for "wisdom is communicated without envy" (Wis 7:13).

§3. The daily search for truth and the deep rootedness of our life of study gradually free us from the half-truths that stand in the way of the full revelation of God in our lives. Study is truly effective when our spiritual life, theological and philosophical understanding, and life experience come together harmoniously; for a missionary's life must reflect his message.

3. Studying to better keep the word of God

217. §1. Our life of study is wholly ordered to a better understanding of, and greater intimacy with, the word of God:#

- Theological work helps brothers to receive the word of God as "the food of their own spiritual lives" and a light for their existence and mission.[131]
- Philosophical study, on the other hand, disposes brothers to perceive in Holy Scripture "a vision of the human being and the world which has exceptional philosophical density" (FR 80).

§2. Keeping the word in one's heart, meditating on it, and putting it into practice, are fruits of divine grace.[132] And so, as St Bonaventure warns and the Council cites, "Let no one believe that it is enough to read without unction, to speculate without devotion, to investigate without wonder, to observe without joy, to act without godly zeal, to know without love, to understand without humility, to study without divine grace, or to reflect as a mirror without divinely inspired wisdom."[133]

129. *Cf.* Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 2018, nos 36-48.
130. Translator's note: *emprise intellectuelle*.
131. *Cf.* Vatican Council II, *Optatam Totius*, no. 16.
132. *Cf.* Lk 2:19, 51; DV 8 §2.
133. St Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentus in Deum*, Prologue, no. 4; cited in Vatican Council II, *Optatam Totius*, no. 16 [Translator's

§3. The study of philosophy and theology awakens in us the desire to proclaim the word of God and to announce the mystery of the Church as a community living by that word.

4. Building community life around fraternal dialogue and the common search for truth

218. §1. We seek to build our community life around fraternal dialogue and the common search for truth. This common search for truth is lived out in an eminent way in chapter discussions, communal lectio divina, the spontaneous fraternal sharing of our experiences and questions, and in moments of community intellectual work.

§2. Tackling a subject area together is a great aid to entering more deeply into the topic and gaining a healthy perspective on it. Even when it is limited on a practical level, intellectual work in common binds us together in charity, enriches our fraternal life, and fosters unity in the priory. It allows us to share our personal breakthroughs in study and inspires us to be assiduous in our inquiry.

§3. So that everyone can participate and experience the joy of entering into the truth together, community intellectual inquiry must take account of the diversity of forms of intelligence, skills, and the rhythm of growth of each of its members. Everyone should be involved in creating a community atmosphere that encourages the exchange of views and common inquiry.

§4. Communal intellectual sharing can also take place during meetings of the province or congregation, or between Brothers and Sisters of the Family of Saint John. The diversity of our origins and the complementarity of men and women will enable us to experience the richness of sharing, in which each person brings the originality of his or her reflections and point of view. Beyond internal cooperation within the Family of Saint John, we are happy to organise or participate in meetings in which we can be enriched by the complementarity of approaches.

5. Serving the evangelisation of the world and culture

219. §1. Intellectual formation plays a part in our preparation for apostolic formation. First of all, this means that brothers must allow themselves to be questioned by the contemporary world and culture so that they might grow in self-understanding and enter into dialogue with the people of today.

§2. Pastoral charity is a strong motivation to persevere in intellectual work, which provides us with the knowledge we need to express the beauty and richness of the good news of Christ. It can also help us to develop new forms of evangelisation (*cf.* VD 94).

§3. In a world in search of wise good sense, our active search for truth, which has its finality in contemplative wisdom, will enable us to explain how Christ, the wisdom of God, comes to respond to the deepest aspirations of the contemporary world and transforms our lives.

---

note: the citation comes from a footnote which is not found in the English translation of *Optatam Totius* available on the Vatican website (supposedly the edition under the editorship of J.L. Gonzalez published by the Daughters of St Paul as *The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II and the Instruction on the Liturgy* in 1967). This citation was taken from the translation made under the editorship of W.M. Abbott, S.J., published as *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966) footnote 47, p. 451]; *cf.* PDV 53.

SECTION TWO

Dynamics of Formation in the Consecrated Life

Chapter 10
FORMATION IN THE VOWS

220. Formation in the vows should enable every brother "to discover (...), assimilate, and deepen that in which religious identity consists" (PI 6). “The counsels are, as it were, the main support of the religious life, since they express in a significant and complete way the evangelical radicalism which characterizes it" (PI12). The vows define a way of life, and so they require specific initiation, based especially on spiritual and human formation, and reflected in all the other dimensions of formation.

I. ENTERING THE DYNAMIC OF CONSECRATION

1. Consecrating ourselves to God in response to his call

a) Responding to Christ's call to give our life to him

221. **§1.** We seek to redouble our efforts to confirm the calling and choice we have received (*cf.* 2 Peter 1:10), consecrating our lives to God every day, making of ourselves a living host, holy and pleasing to God (*cf.* Rom 12:1).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother[134]:

- Rely on God's faithfulness, who does not repent of his call, and to perceive that his divine choice is ever present and actual.
- Give thanks for the way in which God has led him to consecrate himself, to recall the major events that have marked his vocational journey, and to celebrate the anniversaries of his profession.
- Repeat the daily acts of adoration by which, opening himself to God's tenderness, he offers himself to God, strengthens his will to wholly belong to Him, and prepares to follow Him.

b) Self-renunciation in order to follow Christ

222. **§1.** As an extension of our baptism, we renounce the world and its seductions (*cf.* 1 Jn 2:15). As consecrated people, by choosing to follow Christ along the path of the evangelical counsels, we also renounce the goods we possess, our own proper will, and the legitimate desire to get married and start a family.

§2. If we are to remain faithful to our vows, we must "build into [our] lives "a joyful, well-balanced austerity" (Evangelica Testificatio 29) and deliberately determined renunciations (...). This is

134. It is useful to recall that in this chapter, as in the whole of Part Two, this formula introduces suggestions for a concrete pathway to implement the objective of formation prescribed in the first paragraph.

because there cannot be a public witness to Christ poor, chaste, and obedient without asceticism."[135] In this way we can acquire the interior freedom necessary to live out the evangelical counsels. By pronouncing vows, we agree to enter into a spiritual combat that is part of our vocation to imitate Christ. We therefore invoke the Holy Spirit in order to fight this battle and find concrete ways of remaining faithful to our vows; for it is the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who converts our hearts and configures them to the heart of Christ.

§3. The goods we give up are both legitimate and indeed good; renouncing them therefore sets in motion an inner process that takes time. The joy of the gift of ourselves can be momentarily obscured by a sense of loss: we may experience a moment of denial and idealisation; we may also experience the desire to take it all back when we face the sense of the lack created; the experience of lack can also turn into anger and lead to deep sadness. With the help of the Lord and of our brothers, the renunciation that comes with our vows can be transformed into profound acceptance in the footsteps of Christ who offers himself for the life of the world. Such an offering then becomes a source of mysterious fruitfulness both for ourselves and for those around us.

a) Giving and keeping our word

223. We welcome Christ's call as a promise and respond by giving him our word through the vows we take. This is only possible if we first rely on his word to us; it is by experiencing Christ's faithfulness to us that we find the strength to make our vows and remain faithful to them. For us to make this commitment, we also need solid human formation which prepares us to use the freedom we have and makes us people of our word, capable of uniting our promise with our real feelings, and capable of keeping a commitment over time.

2. Taking on Christ's form of life

a) Letting ourselves be configured to Christ chaste, poor, and obedient

224. §1. In order to enter into ever more intimate union with Christ, we make our own the way of life which Jesus chose for himself and which he proposed to the disciples who followed him (*cf.* LG 44); we try to be like him, to enter into his own sentiments, and make him the model of our consecrated life.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother puts his vows at the centre of his relationship with Christ and makes them a concrete criterion for his daily choices.

b) Listening to the Holy Spirit, who shows us the daily path of our consecration

225. §1. Our configuration to Christ does not simply happen once and for all. Rather, it requires a daily openness to listen to the Spirit. For it is the Spirit-Paraclete who enables us to take on the example of Christ, the tradition of consecrated life, the teaching of the Magisterium, and the framework provided by Canon Law and the Constitutions of the Congregation. It is the Spirit who forms our freedom and guides our discernment in the practice of our vows. It is again the Spirit who inspires our hearts to imitate the sentiments of Christ in every situation. It is the Spirit who reminds us of the words of Jesus, enables us to remain faithful in following him, and reject those things which do not conform to our consecration.

§2. The chapter on spiritual formation explains how a brother can learn to discern in light of the Gospel and open up to the work the divine breath wants to achieve in him.

---

135. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life as applied to institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate*, 1983, no. 31 (Internal reference to Evangelica Testificatio, 29).

c) Living our vows in community

226. §1. In every priory, brothers together bear the responsibility of leading a life in conformity with our vows and choosing a communal way of incarnating chastity, poverty, and obedience. Having all made the same commitments, we are called to live out our vows together (*cf.* VC 88-92). We make community life one of the primary places for the exercise of our vows by endeavouring to live our fraternal relationships and life in common in the spirit of the evangelical counsels.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that we:

- Listen to the Spirit together and discern in chapter how the vows are to be practiced in the priory, taking into account the Constitutions, the composition of the priory, and the nature of the priory's mission.
- Encourage one another in the practice of our vows: to sustain his fervour in living out the vows, a brother can draw inspiration from the witness of his brothers, especially the ardour of younger brothers and the witness of older brothers who have persevered through time and trial.

3. Serving the Church through our vows

a) Drawing on the support of the Church, which provides the framework for our consecration

227. §1. Like a mother, the Church creates a space in her heart for those who are called to profess the evangelical counsels; she welcomes consecrated life as a gift God makes for her inner and missionary fruitfulness; she cares for consecrated people, encouraging, exhorting, confirming, or admonishing them, defining the necessary framework for their cooperation with the other ecclesial entities and supporting their prophetic mission.

§2. We want to learn to receive the maternal guidance of the Church, to rely on the frameworks she defines for consecrated people and for our Congregation, and to take our place in the rich tradition of consecrated life, in communion with all consecrated people today, following the multitude of men and women who have lived these vows throughout the centuries.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Make his own the tradition that gave rise to the wisdom of the vows, drawing inspiration from the experience of the Desert Fathers, and making an effort to know the history of consecrated life within the Church.
- Listen to the Church's current magisterium in order to understand how to live his consecration today and seek to live out his vows in obedience to the Church, its law, and its current pastoral objectives.
- Verify that the way he lives out his vows conforms to our charism and our Constitutions, which have been authenticated by the Church.
- Take up his place in the family of consecrated people—with whom we share the same gift within the Church—and encourage fraternal links and inter-institutional collaboration.
- Maintain communion with the whole people of God—laypeople, families, diocesan priests, etc.—drawing on their gifts.

b) Serving the Church through our consecration by being a sign of Christ

228. §1. In professing the evangelical counsels, we have received the mission to be a sign of Christ chaste, poor, and obedient for the Church and for the world. We wish to receive the vows as a charism the Spirit gives us for the service of the Church and its mission.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Receive his consecration as a gift from God that is confirmed by the Church to be put into practice and made to bear fruit.
- Ask for the grace to exercise fully the charism of consecrated life, knowing that even if the charismatic aspect surpasses his awareness and intention, it is not exercised without his own engagement, and that he himself must act if he wants to let God act through him.
- Develop awareness that living the vows "has always offered a witness to values which challenge society just as they challenge the religious themselves. Religious poverty, chastity, and obedience can speak forcefully and clearly to today's world which is suffering from so much consumerism and discrimination, eroticism and hatred, violence and oppression.[136]
- Without letting himself become enclosed in his own self-image, consent to the fact that the witness of his state of life makes him a public person, who will be looked at and evaluated, and that the world expects him to bear witness to a life in conformity with the Gospel.

II. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF CHASTITY

229. §1. The sacred bond of chastity is considered "the 'door' of the whole consecrated life" (VC 32). In a world in which eroticisation, adulterous relationships, pornography, and a contraceptive mentality are encouraged, and in which a great deal of sexual violence has been brought to light, the vision of chastity has been damaged, and its practice has become more demanding. The relationship we have to ourselves, to others, to family, and to the community, and our conception of sexuality, genitality, and fertility, differs from culture to culture. However, whatever our background or wherever we are sent, our desire remains the same to follow Christ and to live the celibacy we have professed in continence and chastity, so that we can respond to Jesus' call to follow him in the form of life he chose for himself, strive for perfect charity, and prepare for the coming Kingdom.

§2. Formation in the vow of chastity is based on the development of emotional, sexual, and relational maturity as presented in the chapter on human formation and is also a matter of spiritual formation.

1. Embracing the vow of chastity as a constant call and a daily mission

230. §1. With the vow of chastity we enter a long-term process, in which God's grace and our work on ourselves constantly intersect. It is much more than a simple one-time promise; it is a commitment to a lifestyle at the school of the Lord. We seek to live the vow of chastity as a daily calling and as a mission.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

136. *Cf.* CICLSAL, *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life as applied to institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate*, 1983, no. 17; *cf. Idem, Religious and Human Promotion*, 1978, no. 15.

- Listen to the Holy Spirit every day, learning from him how to love in an appropriate way, without possessing those he meets, so that he might lead them to God.
- Seek in prayer, lectio divina, the example of consecrated Saints, the teaching of the magisterium, and recent spiritual works that are open to the human sciences, ways of living his vow of chastity in daily life.
- When feelings and desires contrary to this vow arise, turn to the Lord and learn from Him how to place his affective capacity and vital energy at the service of the Kingdom—without neglecting the contribution offered by the behavioural sciences and the importance of human formation.
- Develop a reflection and a sharing of experiences on what human and spiritual fruitfulness means for a consecrated person and how their vow of chastity bears fruit for the Church.

2. Putting God at the centre of our affective life and being intentional in our celibacy.

231. §1. By accepting to renounce marriage for the sake of the Kingdom, we seek to welcome God's love in the solitude of our hearts and to acquire a "universal" heart, loving every person we meet as Christ loves them, with renewed intensity and freedom. We make every effort to give God prime place in our hearts, channelling the power of our affectivity toward him by placing "at the center of [our] affective life a 'more immediate' relationship with God through Christ, in the Spirit" (PI 13).

§2. For this reason, brothers renounce having a spouse or an intimate affective relationship, maintaining integral continence in the area of sexuality by abstaining from anything in daily life that might impede the consistent practice of chaste celibacy. Furthermore, brothers must discern whether the people or things (objects, activities, etc.) to which they are attached are fitting for a consecrated heart—in which case the relationship to the person or thing can be developed further—or whether they lead him away from living chastely—in which case they should be rejected.

§3. In order to give God prime place in his life, we recommend that each brother:

- Open his heart to God and accept God's love for him, consenting to His love and abandoning himself to it.
- Seek to respond to God's love by giving Him exclusivity over his heart, building up daily faithfulness by nurturing his spiritual life in all its dimensions (*cf.* Chapter 7).
- Allow himself the possibility of developing healthy friendships with men or women, making sure they spring from a chaste heart and lead to spiritual communion (*cf.* CCC 2347).
- Enlarge his heart to the breadth of Christ's charity and avoid focusing solely on his own needs and becoming resolutely set in his ways, like a "selfish old bachelor."

3. Drawing support from the virtue of chastity

232. §1. In order for us to be able to love with a free and undivided heart, the vow of chastity is supported by its corresponding virtue, which enables us to live our affective and sexual life in a coherent way. Moreover, by accepting Christ's invitation to live by his own chastity, we have agreed to enter into a dynamic which surpasses us and goes far beyond any human effort, since it is a question of loving as Christ himself loves.

§2. In addition to what has been developed in the chapter on human formation, we recommend that each brother draw on the virtue of chastity in order to live out his consecration by:

- Giving the other person interior space and checking, through self-examination or fraternal dialogue, that he does not have a hold over them. In contrast to having a hold over others, the gratuitousness of love is one of the most excellent fruits of chastity.
- Paying particular attention to the position he holds in relation to others: a symmetrical or an asymmetrical relationship, a position of responsibility, the responsible adult of a group, an accompanier, etc.
- Knowing how to embrace as well as deprive himself of what gives him gratification, so that he might gain inner freedom.
- Accepting bouSndaries and respecting the law in order to ensure a framework conducive to building balanced relationships.

All these elements help us to leave behind and grieve over an illusory and dangerous omnipotence, in order to open wide our hearts.

§3. Progress in chastity goes through stages marked by imperfection or sin. On his journey of growth, a brother will try to integrate his positive experiences, in order to give thanks for them, as well as his negative experiences, so that he might learn to know himself, humble himself peacefully before God, and remain vigilant for the future. "Frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation, recourse to regular spiritual direction, and the sharing of a truly sisterly or brotherly love within the community, which is brought about by frank and cordial relationships" (PI 13), are helpful to persevere in chastity.[137] Stability and the environment in which one lives can also play a role in one's constancy in chastity.

4. Self-giving with a pure heart

233. §1. We seek to give full meaning to our vow of chastity by learning to make an integral gift of our person: body, heart, and mind. The mobilisation of our whole person is realised in a gift of self, which takes place not only in the area of sexuality but also requires the development of a pure heart.

§2. Chastity does not consist solely in bodily continence, for the passions arise from the heart and therefore the soul. Bodily continence loses its meaning if the soul nurtures impure desires and fantasies. The principle of chastity is in the soul, and it is mainly in the integrity of our heart that chastity consists.

§3. In addition to the practice of temperance and renunciation in the area of sexuality, a brother who wishes to purify his heart and strengthen his vow of chastity will look to:

- Practise asceticism in relation to food, sleep, manual work, and avoidance of near occasions of sin.
- Fight all his disordered passions at the same time as lust, because the passions often feed on each other.
- Make an effort to acquire, along with chastity, the full range of Christian virtues—especially humility, patience, and meekness.

137. St Benedict recommended his monks "love chastity" (Rule of St Benedict, no. 4) and "in chaste love [...] exercise fraternal charity" (no. 72). [English translation from *The Rule of St. Benedict* (London: S.P.C.K., 1931).]

- Make use of the traditional weapons employed in the spiritual combat for chastity: guarding the heart, attentive reading of and meditation on the Holy Scriptures, keeping his death in mind, regularly opening his heart to a spiritual accompanier, and above all, trustful prayer.
- Lean on the Lord in his struggles: "For the soul will be attacked by [lust] as long as it does not recognize that it is in a war beyond its powers and that it cannot obtain victory by its own effort unless it is shored up by the help and protection of the Lord."[138]

§4. According to the most authentic tradition of the Fathers, the ultimate goal of the virtue of chastity is not to destroy eros in us, but to give prime place to the love that comes from God: "A chaste man is someone who has driven out bodily love by means of divine love, who has used heavenly fire to quench the fires of the flesh."[139]

5. Developing integral chastity

234. As the foundation of every right relationship, chastity extends to every relationship we have with others (God, brothers, the community, people we meet in apostolic life, creation). It thus influences our life of faith and prayer, our fraternal life, our search for truth, and the relationships we have in apostolic life. By allowing the vow of chastity to transform our various activities, we progressively develop an integral chastity.

a) Chastity and our relationship with God

235. **§1.** By working to convert the way in which we perceive God, we can progressively come to see the hollowness of any conceptions of God, the spiritual life, or the consecrated life we hold that are not true or chaste. We must verify that it is indeed the living God that we put at the centre of our heart and not a projection of ourselves, our parental images, or an "idol." Chastity helps us on this path. It allows us to position ourselves in truth before God; to temper possible inclinations to omnipotence or monopolisation that lead us to want to control God; to maintain a right relationship with God, in humility.

§2. To this end, we try to maintain purity of heart and are watchful to keep our thoughts in God. We are also watchful that we do not fall into spiritual gluttony—the inordinate seeking or use of consolations—or into an immoderate attachment to liturgical details.

b) Chastity and community life

236. **§1.** Chastity, as a virtue that qualifies one's relationship with others, is exercised in a particular way in the common life and finds an important support in the bonds of fraternal life experienced in community (*cf.* PC 12). Chastity in fraternal relations is exercised principally through the development of a "chaste fraternal accompaniment" that enables the humble service exemplified by Christ in the washing of feet to be lived out on a daily basis.

§2. The development of chastity in community life requires:

- They every brother learns to give a place to the other in fraternal life, being attentive to his person and his needs.

---

138. John Cassian, *Institutes*, VI, 5 (tr. mod. by L.Dysinger, O.S.B: based on: [1] Terrence Kardong, tr.,. *Cassian on Chastity: Institute 6, Conference 12, Conference 22. English trans. and commentary.* (Richardton: Assumption Abbey Press, 1993.) & [2] *The Monastic Institutes*, tr. J. Bertram (St. Austin Press, 1999), http://ldysinger.stjohnsem.edu/@texts/0415_cassian/02_inst-06.htm, accessed 26.04.23).
139. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, XV, 2 (Translated by C. Luibheid and N. Russell, The Classics of Western Spirituality series (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 171.).

- That every brother respects the common boundaries and rules in community life—including the cloistered areas determined by the conventual chapter.
- That the community allows every brother to fully take his place in cordial and cooperative relationships, without any one brother taking over community life.
- That the conventual chapter establishes a balance between the different aspects that make up community life (spiritual life, common practice of the vows, community activities, mission, study, etc.), as well as between personal autonomy and common obligations—excess or laxity opens the door to brothers seeking some form of compensation, to aberrant behaviour and abuse, to bitterness or resentment.
- That the brother in authority plays his role as regulator, positioning himself fairly with respect to the common good and the good of each individual, as well as in the establishment of genuine subsidiarity.

The pedagogy for living out these different elements is presented in detail in the chapter on community formation.

§3. The culture of chaste relationships within the community extends to larger communities such as the local and universal Church and civil society, knowing how to find one's rightful place and inserting oneself with discernment into existing structures and laws. A well-adjusted sense of the Church and respect for legitimate law contributes, in this sense, to the building of chaste relationships.

§4. Fraternal relationships, lived according to the commandment to love and within the evangelical counsel of chastity, in turn become a luminous witness to the love of Jesus in the world and a powerful aid to personally living consecrated celibacy in the apostolic life.

c) Chastity and the search for truth

237. §1. The vow of chastity must lead us to a well-adjusted relationship with the truth: we must seek the truth without "possessing" it, without wanting to seize control over it, but letting it work in us, allowing it to reach even those places where we lack light and freedom (*cf.* 1 Jn 3:20; Jn 8:31).

§2. To this end:

- We seek to develop purity of heart, which disposes us to the contemplative life (*cf.* Mt 5:8).
- We make the decision not to seek to dominate others through our knowledge and intelligence, renouncing the desire to shine through intellectual work, and accept the humble labour of study.
- We seek more to serve the truth than to make it serve us, which amounts to loving the truth—who is Christ—more than our representations and understanding of it.[140]

d) Chastity and the apostolate

238. §1. Formation in chastity should enable us to enter into an authentic relationship with those to whom we are sent, in such a way that through us they can recognise the One who sent us: the Risen Christ. The Forth Gospel shows us Christ coming close to various women and men, some of whom were broken by life (*cf.* Jn 3:1-21; 4:4-42, etc.), always seeking to lead them to the "Father who sent him" (*cf.* Jn 4:34, etc.).

140. See Chapter 9, no. 204.

§2. At the school of John the Baptist, whose relationship with Jesus is marked by poverty and self-effacement (*cf.* Jn 1:19-23; 3:29), we learn to receive our rightful place, to rejoice in God's call of those we accompany, and to be invested in those whom the Lord entrusts to us without being controlling over them.

e) Chastity and the other vows

239. The vow of chastity is connected to the other vows: it cannot be separated from the vow of obedience, which enables us to build up relationships that are just according to God, nor from the vow of poverty, which proposes a spiritual way of building up desire through the experience of lack and of maintaining a suitable relationship with creation.

III. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF POVERTY

240. §1. "Poverty frees one from the slavery to things and to artificial needs which drive consumer society and leads to the discovery of Christ, the only treasure truly worth living for" (SAFC 22). Our formation should enable us, by leading a life in accordance with our vow, to discover the beauty of being poor in spirit, and to become a prophetic sign for the world of "the freedom which springs from a life of poverty whose only treasure is the kingdom of God" (SAFC 17).

§2. The relationship one has to money and to private property is perceived very differently in different contexts and cultures. In addition, every brother enters the Community having been shaped by his own education, personal history, and singular experience of life. Formation in the vow of poverty therefore requires a lucid approach that takes the brothers' cultural milieu into account, the possibility of speaking freely in community where everyone is mutually listened to, and respect for differences that arise in this area.

1. Finding our treasure in the poverty of Christ

241. §1. The vow of poverty reaches the depths of our human heart by making us renounce, for the sake of the kingdom of God, any desire to monopolise. It thus liberates our deepest capacities to give ourselves gratuitously in the image of "that total gift of self which the three Divine Persons make to one another" (VC 21). In this spirit, our formation aims to enable us to participate in Christ's self-abasement, which is the foundation of our life in grace and our voluntary poverty. To be poor is to accept losing everything in order to gain Christ, our only treasure.

§2. To imitate Christ's poverty, we recommend that each brother:

- Discover poverty as a beatitude and the fruit of a certain fullness, experiencing the joy and freedom that come from being more attached to Christ than to any earthly treasure.
- Meditate on the Gospels and listen to the Spirit in order to hear the daily callings that will enable him to unite his heart and his actions to the poverty of Christ.
- Embrace the ascetic dimension of poverty, opting for sobriety and simplicity of life in order to receive the treasure of Christ.
- Draw inspiration from the way in which the Saints—especially religious—have lived in poverty, from the teachings of the great spiritual writers and the church tradition on poverty, in order to better understand how to live poverty today.

- Relinquish self-possession and not fear seeing the depths of his own misery, discovering his poverty as a creature and a sinner.

2. Developing a sense of work and responsibility

242. §1. Our formation in poverty includes the acquisition of good working habits and a sense of responsibility. We must commit ourselves to work and recognise the value every person's work has.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Accept that, like all people, he too has to work, and to complete his work faithfully without being amateurish. A brother cannot be less committed to his work than the laity are to theirs. We must heed Paul's warning: "If any one will not work, let him not eat" (2 Thes 3:10).
- Take care of the goods he is given to use and the places in which he lives, develop good practical sense by respecting the value of things, not abuse the time or resources people make available to the community to help them, and give fair remuneration for work accomplished.
- Seek through his work to contribute to the Community's livelihood, not for excess or profit, but to live a simple and honest life.

3. Choosing sobriety and moderation

243. §1. In order to incarnate our vow of poverty, we renounce the possession of our own personal goods and try to be content with what is necessary, to reduce our needs and renounce what is superfluous.

§2. In a world in which sobriety is becoming a necessary way of life if we are to preserve our common home, the vow of poverty should impel us to "responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God's world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment."[141] Together with the whole Church, we wish to undergo an ecological conversion. This first of all entails a change of heart and transformation of our mentality; it is then embodied in a lifestyle that is increasingly consistent with a respect for nature and for those in greatest poverty.

§3. To go further in this aspect requires:

- That we regularly review our lifestyle by adjusting our spending to the real needs of our community and apostolic work.
- That we learn to enjoy the simple things of life, being wilfully content with things that are ordinary and not perfect, valuing what lasts, and maintaining things, without, however, being scared to replace or renew things when needed.
- That we distance ourselves from fashions, trends, and advertising that foster unnecessary desires and an illusory need to consume.
- That we take ecological criterion into account in our temporal choices.
- That we take advice from laypeople on the implications of our temporal choices (investments, maintenance of the convent, purchases) and ask them to offer any corrections to the way we lead our life, whether they deem it to be marked by unhelpful scarcity or unnecessary excess.

141. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, no. 214.

4. Developing a sense of sharing

244. §1. "By proposing an incarnate spirituality, the process of formation leads one to see reality from the point of view of the poor, to develop an effective compassion for them, to take responsibility for suffering, and to commit oneself to promoting justice, peace, and the integrity of creation."[142]

§2. To go further in this:

- We seek to recognise the human dignity of every person we meet, whatever their condition, especially the poor, in whom we see a mendicant Christ.
- We keep our eyes and ears open to the needs of the people we meet, so that we might be able to identify misery, destitution, oppression, marginalisation, hunger, alienation, ignorance, etc. The more time we spend with the poor, the better we will be at knowing how to recognise poverty, see what people's needs are, and share with them in a discreet way.
- We learn to take time for the people God puts on our path, giving them our attention, not placing ourselves above them, and respecting their dignity, so that we might truly encounter them and be a neighbour to them.

§3. Procedures for welcoming the poor and providing for their concrete needs should be defined in conventual chapter so that we do not find ourselves caught short and have to send the poor away. We must foresee the need for extra provisions in order to welcome the poor, set aside a percentage of our budgets that we can share, and accept the need to open up time in our schedule for the unexpected.

§4. Developing a sense of sharing begins within the community. It is concretely expressed in the fact that we each rely on the community for our standard of living, that we faithfully put our goods in common, and that every brother receives according to his needs (*cf.* PI 14). In community we learn to take account of our brothers and sisters and to share the gifts we receive with them.

5. Accepting lack and dependence

245. §1. Through our vow of poverty, we accept that from time to time we will suffer want, that we live in dependence on the community, and that we must discern the use we make of goods in obedience to our superior and the conventual chapter. This entails seeking the common good, being open to our superior with respect to the use we make of goods entrusted to us, limiting our use of goods, and receiving everything we have or are given as a gift from God.

§2. To live by this dependence, every brother must:

- Receive what the community gives him with gratitude and contribute to the community's discernment of the use of the priory's goods.
- Learn to take care of the common goods used by all the brothers, being mindful to respect the use other brothers make of them.
- "[R]egularly review with his superior the way in which he incarnates his vow of poverty" (Dir. 183 §1).
- Develop sincere gratitude toward those who support the community through their donations, without neglecting the value of even the most modest gifts.

142. CICLSAL, *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, 2021, no. 19.

246. §1. The vow of poverty requires that we address our desire for possessions. Every brother has his own idea of the goods he needs to live and feel secure. Limiting goods and their use requires that each of us learn how to manage our lack of things and calm any anxiety felt. This task of human formation is necessary if a brother is to approach religious poverty in a mature and peaceful way; it enables brothers to positively welcome, beyond their human expectations, the insecurity created by the vow of poverty as an expression of our state as pilgrims in this life and an ongoing call to conversion.

§2. To this end, we recommend that each brother learn to:

- Experience lack without immediately seeking to fill it, but rather put a name to it and discern its reality with his accompanier, listening to what it reveals about his personality and evaluating whether the gap should be filled or rather experienced as a place of growth.
- Mourn the loss of the things he voluntarily gives up.
- Serenely accept the frustration of goods being out of reach.

247. It is, however, the responsibility of every brother, the superior, and the conventual chapter, to ensure that the exercise of poverty does not lead to a negligence in self-care or disregard for the needs of others. Every priory must ensure that the dignity and rights of all the brothers are respected in the just distribution of community goods, under the watchful care of the conventual chapter. Particular attention should be paid to meeting brothers' health care expenses and associated needs (*cf.* Dir. 185 §3.2).

6. Formation in discernment

248. §1. The demands of the vow of poverty require us to make regular adjustments and undertake ever deeper discernment; poverty is lived out in daily life by listening to the Spirit who speaks to us through personal and community discernment. Each conventual chapter must make an annual evaluation of "the standard of living, both of the priory and the brothers, so that it might maintain a level that is fair in relation to the economic level of the surrounding population" (Dir. 182).

§2. To go further in this, we must:

- Be attentive to the way the cultural environment in which we live views poverty, so that we might bear genuine evangelical witness through our vow.
- Gain at least a basic understanding of the economic reality faced by those to whom we are sent (managing a family budget, social security, insurance systems, etc.).
- Respect as a community what is necessary to lead our consecrated life, recognising and respecting our basic needs (security, food, health).
- Seek the advice of knowledgeable laypeople to enlighten our discernment.
- Clearly distinguish poverty from parsimony, not hesitating to spend boldly for mission or the good of the community.

7. Formation in economic management

249. §1. Formation in an "evangelical" management of temporal goods is an essential part of formation in poverty. In his priory, every brother "must accept the responsibility to see that the utmost attention is given to ensuring that the administration of economic resources is always essentially at the service of the expressed purpose of the proper charism."[143] To this end, every brother must know the rudiments of sound and rigorous economic management, be aware of his responsibilities in this area, and learn

143. *Idem*, no. 18.

to discern with reference to the Gospel and the charism of the Congregation, thus "permitting choices for the mission to be innovative and prophetic."[144]

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Become accustomed to working with budgets and provisional estimates in apostolic or community projects, seeking to ensure that these reflect the values and spirit of our Institute.
- Adopt the reflex of asking the bursar where the accounts stand on a given budget item before considering a major expenditure and to ask for the agreement of the conventual chapter if it exceeds the expenditure ceiling the conventual chapter has established.

§3. For its part, the conventual chapter must endeavour to:

- Reflect on how to incarnate the charism in the management of goods, as well as the compatibility of projects with the charism of the community, following the directives of the Church.[145]
- Establish clear procedures for the use of money in the priory and set a maximum expenditure that any brother can make on his own.
- Provide each role within the community with a clear definition of its economic requirements, so that the brother who assumes responsibility for that role can draw up a corresponding budget.

§4. The Congregation and the Provinces must ensure that:

- They provide specific training for priory bursars in accounting, tax, and legal matters; for example, by taking time to train with a competent bursar (religious or lay).
- Brothers are made aware of the importance of sound management and the need to approach economic issues with both a sympathetic and realistic outlook.

IV. FORMATION IN THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

250. **§1.** The exercise of the vow of obedience is "a demanding school (...) wherein one learns to entrust oneself so much to God and to his Fatherhood, as also to trust in men and women – his sons and daughters and our brothers and sisters" (SAO 29); with a heart enlivened by the desire for God, every brother will learn to undertake discernment together with his legitimate authorities in order to listen to the word of God and His will.

§2. "[T]he coming to awareness of the value of the individual person, with his or her vocation, and intellectual, affective and spiritual gifts, with his or her freedom and rational abilities; the centrality of the spirituality of communion, with the valuing of the instruments that help one to live it; a different and less individualistic way of understanding mission, in the sharing of all members of the People of God, with the resulting forms of concrete collaboration" (SAO 3); all of these elements have contributed in recent decades to the evolution of the way of living and perceiving the exercise of obedience in consecrated life.

144. *Idem*, no. 19.
145. Based on the document of the CICLSAL mentioned above, *Economy at the service of charism and mission*, 2021.

1. Developing interior obedience to God

251. §1. The vow of obedience requires above all that brothers cultivate interior obedience. Obedience is a Christian virtue that begins with listening to God's voice in the sanctuary of our conscience, develops in the progressive submission of our desires and actions to God's law, and blossoms in the generous offering of our person as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (*cf.* Rom 12:1). In this way, we wish to let ourselves be conformed, through the Holy Spirit, to the Son's obedience to his Father, and place our "life entirely in Christ's hands so that [he] may use it according to God's design and make it a masterpiece" (SAFC 22).

§2. The growth of our interior obedience is achieved through:

- A spiritual capacity to perceive the voice of God through Scripture, the interior Illuminations he gives us, the people we meet, the events of life, and the various mediations of authority, especially those of religious life.
- The development of a "reverence for truth" (EN 78), which submits our judgement to that of the First Truth.
- The formation of our conscience according to the word of God and the teaching of the Church.

2. Being formed to respect the different areas of authority

252. §1. The practice of obedience in religious life involves various complementary authorities and different levels of application, making it a complex reality. It requires ongoing work to discern the authorities involved in every decision and the corresponding step to be taken. Whatever the level of authority involved, it should always be remembered that "genuine obedience considers not the person to whom it is offered but Him for whose sake it is offered: and if it is exercised for the sake of our Creator and Lord alone, then it is the very Lord of everyone who is obeyed" (SAO 11).[146]

§2. We seek to understand the scope and limits of every level of authority and learn to situate them hierarchically. Brothers will thus:

- Recognise in the Gospel their first Rule of Life and in the practice of God's commandments their first form of obedience.
- Offer obedience in an adult and responsible way—without childish submission or adolescent negotiation—to the religious authorities of our Congregation.
- Accept and welcome the Congregation's charism as an interpretation of the Gospel confirmed by the Church, and the Constitutions as an expression of the form of life we wish to follow.
- Then submit to the authority of the Church—through the Holy Father, the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, our Ordinary, and every bishop according to his specific jurisdiction—as well as to Canon Law and the various norms of the Church.
- Obey the legitimate authorities and just laws of civil society, in the knowledge that all authority forms part of the order established by God (*cf.* Rm 13:1-8).
- Seek to discover, without being constrained to do so by law, what is commonly called fraternal obedience, which makes us "attentive and reach out to take advice in every situation in life, and above all from every person who lives next to [us], a mediation of the will of the Lord, however mysterious" (SAO 20-g).

146. SAO 11, citing St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, 84.

§3. The community, at its different levels (Congregation, Province, Priory), will ensure that the structures of community life are sufficiently clear for everyone to position themselves properly and for obedience to be given to the legitimate authority; care will be taken to avoid confusion and a lack of clarity, which generates conflicts and abusive situations.

3. Forming personal autonomy

253. §1. In order to pay God the homage of our will (*cf.* PI 15), we try to become more conscious of our desires and the proper, free and autonomous subject of our life. The practical exercise of the vow of obedience presupposes a solid human formation.

§2. To go further in his choice of religious obedience, we recommend that each brother:

- Seek to become more lucid about the representations of authority and community that often unconsciously influence him when he exercises obedience and identify the influences of his culture of origin (familial, tribal, national, etc.).
- Take up his place in the community by learning to speak as his true self with his authority and his brothers, discovering himself as a peer in the community—a brother among brothers—who has as much right as anyone else, who knows how to position himself without being walked over, but is also aware of his own boundaries.
- Engage fully in dialogue with the relevant authority and freely express his opinion—while also being able to put his own views into perspective in a healthy way, to accept a decision taken by a superior that does not correspond to his own initial sense of the matter, and to stick loyally to what has been decided.

§3. As a result, in initial and ongoing formation:

- Religious obedience will be presented as a path that allows us to enter into the freedom of the children of God and to grow in the maturity of our humanity.
- We will help every brother to emerge from anonymity and create an atmosphere in which everyone feels respected, welcomed, valued, and loved.
- The exercise of freedom will be encouraged by giving due value to a brother's discernment, promoting dialogue and cooperation in decision-making.
- The principal of subsidiarity will be applied to guide brothers in the discovery of their responsibility and autonomy.

§4. For his part, the superior must:

- Enter into dialogue with the brother by giving him the elements of discernment he needs, as well as the time and space to enable him to collaborate in the discernment process and give his proper consent to obey.
- Solicit a brother's freedom rather than use coercion, so that obedience is as much as possible the fruit of a free choice.
- Draw on his own creativity, the brother's creativity, and that of the community, in order to find solutions adapted to the situations encountered.
- Exercise authority by following the voice of his conscience, in obedience to God and the Constitutions, maintaining the freedom to make a choice in certain cases that is difficult for the brother.

- Help the brother to keep his commitments, in fidelity to his vow of obedience and respect for the Constitutions.

4. Entering into spiritual discernment with a brother in authority

254. §1. In addition to ordinary obedience to our Constitutions, it is often necessary to carry out discernment with one's religious authority in order to affirm or reject a particular call in relation to apostolic life, community life, specific needs, etc. Brothers must all learn, in a spirit of obedience, to carry out this discernment in common with a brother in authority.

§2. In order to make his discernment a genuine cooperation in obedience, a brother could:

- Scrutinise his conscience to ascertain whether the object of his proposal or request is truly for the glory of God, whether it responds to a genuine need, and whether his heart is free from attachments and willing to accept the authority's decision.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit to help him discover God's will, and at the same time adopt an attitude of receptivity to the inspirations and motions of the Spirit.
- Explain to his superior his proposal as well as the path his spiritual discernment of the matter has taken.
- Ensure he listens together with his religious authority to what the Spirit is saying, through a dialogue of faith and sharing in truth that takes into account the pros and cons, and if possible, reach an agreement, which sometimes requires a leap of faith.
- Accept in faith the decision of an authority, which may or may not affirm his prior discernment.

§3. To be authentically evangelical, dialogue with an authority must exclude the two extremes of infantile submission to an authority figure or contractual negotiation with a partner; the exchange should instead take the form of a common listening to God, who speaks in the heart of each person and in the events of daily life, in order to arrive at a decision taken by the authority to which one submits.

§4. When a brother does not think that what his authority is asking him to do is well-founded, he can appeal to a higher authority. The brother might also discern that his disagreement with the person in authority, when faced with a command given legitimately, could be a call to deeper obedience and self-offering that contributes to redemption, and which he will have to carry in prayer and trust in God (*cf.* SAO 10).

5. Cooperating in the conventual chapter and practising collegiality

255. §1. We recognise in the exercise of collegiality one of the highest moments of consecrated fraternity and consider "the community [to be] the best place in which to recognize and accept the will of God" (SAO 20-e). Every brother will therefore learn to participate in community discernment and to respect the decisions of the conventual chapter.

§2. "Even if true and appropriate discernment is reserved to the most important decisions, the spirit of discernment ought to characterize every decision-making process that involves the community. A time of individual prayer and reflection together with a series of important attitudes for choosing together what is right and pleasing to God, should never be missing prior to every decision." (SAO 20-e).

§3. The means of community discernment are outlined in the chapter on community formation (Chapter 11).

Chapter 11
COMMUNITY FORMATION

256. §1. Fraternal life in community, a characteristic requirement of religious life, is rooted in the human reality of living together and the Christian requirement of fraternal charity. That is why, although community formation requires attention in its own right, it maintains a close link with human and spiritual formation. Because community life is a constitutive element of our form of consecrated life and resonates in a special way with the teaching of the Johannine writings, the quality of our formation in community life influences all our activities and reflects on each of the other dimensions of formation.

§2. Community life consists of two inseparable elements: "fraternal communion," which has its source in hearts animated by charity and is built up through interpersonal relationships marked by the fraternal love which Jesus commanded us to exercise; and "life in common," which involves collaboration and taking part in common acts in accordance with the norms that regulate community life (*cf.* FLC 3).

§3. The aim of our community formation is therefore: that we learn to become brothers (I), that we find our place in the community (II), participating in its construction and its government (IV and V), and that we gradually become people of communion, witnesses to the universal call to enter into Trinitarian communion (VI).

I. BECOMING "BROTHERS"

257. Fraternal communion is both a gift from God and a reality that must be learned and built up. With God's grace we therefore seek to build true fraternity among us, embodying it within our priories in "a rich and warm fraternal life" (FLC 37) and offering each of our brothers "true and profound friendship" (SAFC 29) in Christ.

1. Receiving brothers from God and walking together towards holiness

258. §1. The love of Christ brings us together in unity within the community.[147] We seek to recognise our neighbour in each and every brother of the priory and to make ourselves their neighbour, aware that the road to holiness passes through the brothers who are given to us.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:[148]

- Rely on the choice of God's providence, which brings us together as members of the same Congregation in the same priory (*cf.* Jn 15:16).
- Receive every brother as someone entrusted to him by the Lord, to bless the brother, to want what is good for him, and to want to be an artisan of that good with the Lord.
- Develop "the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and to prize it as a gift from God", for oneself and for the community (RC 29).

147. *Cf.* Hymn *Ubi caritas*: "*Ubi caritas est vera, Deus ibi est. Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*".
148. It is worth remembering that in this chapter, as in the whole of Part Two, this formula introduces suggestions for concrete ways of implementing the objective of formation set out in the first paragraph.

- Try to make concessions in order to support brothers in their daily lives (*cf.* Col 3:13).

2. Taking an interest in one's brothers and giving them space

259. §1. Becoming a brother to our brothers means seeking to discover and make our own Jesus' way of looking at them. To this end, we seek to recognise the uniqueness of every person, to take an interest in them, to give them a place in our lives, to respect the personal and spiritual space they need to be themselves, and to be attentive to their spiritual and human needs.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Ask the Lord to evangelise the way he views his brothers, so that Jesus might reveal to him the way in which he himself loves each of them.
- Pray daily for each of the brothers of his priory and for their intentions.
- Welcome the presence and value of others through simple everyday words, gestures and "good manners," allowing himself to be taught by the Spirit who shows us how to act towards each of our brothers.
- Honour Christ present in every brother by focusing on what he brings to the community, and also by learning the art of descriptive compliments, which is an essential element of benevolent communication.
- Allow himself to be taught by the Lord through what the brother lives and says.

3. Sharing with brothers and knowing how to talk about oneself

260. §1. In fraternal life every brother must learn to discover the treasure he bears within, as in a clay vessel, and how to share it with his brothers. This means he must be able to both trust his brothers and win his brothers' trust; he must learn to speak about himself with simplicity and moderation; and he must learn to receive with religious fear the trust that his brothers place in him when they speak of themselves.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to "remove his sandals" before the sacred land of the other (*cf.* Ex 3, 5; EG 169).
- Check whether he is able to take into account what he is experiencing and feeling when expressing an opinion.
- Develop basic manners and etiquette—a certain savoir-vivre—in relationships, which will enable him to establish a climate conducive to healthy fraternal relations, mutual trust, and dialogue between brothers.
- Allow himself to open up to others in truth, without fearing that their fragility might sometimes touch upon and reveal his own vulnerability.
- Learn how to reveal his talents and welcome the talents of every member of the community.
- Welcome personal and cultural differences as a means of mutual enrichment and enjoyment.

4. Making oneself available in service and mutual support

261. §1. Fraternity involves service and mutual support: we must learn to remain available to our brothers and to encourage one another. As members of the same community, we experience being members of one body: "If one member suffers, all suffer together" (1 Cor 12:26).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Fight against indifference in the common life and be attentive to his brothers.
- Identify the needs of others and take them into account in an appropriate way, knowing when they need help or simply to be listened to.
- Learn how to organise his time to allow time for other people.
- Be particularly attentive to those who are fragile (the elderly, sick and infirm, brothers in personal difficulty, etc.).

5. Recognising together what has hurt us and moving forward in a reconciled relationship

262. §1. Faced with the inevitable trials in our fraternal relationships, we must learn to walk together in forgiveness. We seek to eliminate from our lives "bitterness, irritation, anger, outbursts or insults" and instead to forgive "one another, just as God in Christ forgave [us]" (Eph 4:32).

§2. To promote reconciliation, every brother must:

- Take the decision, before an offence occurs, never to take the path of revenge to settle an insult, injury or betrayal.
- Be prepared to hear what the other brother has to say about him and acknowledge his own responsibility in the conflict.
- Respect the emotions of those involved and give everyone the time they need to move forward.
- Rely on prayer and look to Christ's example for the necessary strength and path to reconciliation.
- Learn how to make the most of formation courses offered by the secular world on expressing emotions and benevolent / non-violent communication.
- Build a shared and sincere will to move beyond any conflict, committing himself to create conditions with the other brother that will enable new conflicts to be avoided or favour their best resolution.

§3. Priories can contribute to the communion and reconciliation of brothers by creating a time and place in which brothers can discuss both happy and painful moments. A regular fraternal review (annual, monthly, weekly, etc.), during which every brother speaks and listens to the others, can help to consolidate relationships and foster just reconciliation.

§4. To be authentic, the process of forgiveness requires an inner journey that is unique for every brother and every situation, but which can be marked out by certain stages.[149]

149. For example, Jean Monbourquette's Twelve Steps to Forgiveness is a useful reference.

II. FINDING ONE'S PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY

263. The process of community formation involves an effort of incorporation: becoming part of the group and learning to find one's place within it.

1. Knowing how to relate to the group

264. **§1.** The first step towards incorporation is self-knowledge: becoming aware of our relational behaviour, the impressions and mechanisms that govern our relationship with the group.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Work on becoming aware of his inhibitions, his desire to take control, or blind spots in his relationship with others and the community.
- Identify any parallels between the way he lives in community and his family upbringing, put into words the impressions he has that govern his relationship with the group, and share in community (within a setting of confidentiality) the respective impressions they have of each other by identifying cultural differences.
- Learn to listen to the remarks, praise, reproaches, or criticisms of the brothers with whom he lives and gradually discern what is right or misplaced in them—especially when similar praises or reproaches are repeated.

§3. In every priory, work towards self-knowledge can be facilitated and mutual understanding improved by regularly taking stock of the way in which each member lives in relationship with the other members of the community, and the way in which they take part in the various activities of common life. External professionals may occasionally be called in to help with this work.

2. Integrating into the group and taking one's place in the community

265. **§1.** It is then a matter of integrating into the community without feeling threatened by it or overwhelming it. Integration involves a balancing act between the personal and the communal, between giving of oneself and welcoming the gifts of the group. Finding one's place in the community also means taking one's place in the community: taking one's place as a member of the chapter, holding and discharging one's office, speaking out, getting involved when it is expected. It means not taking the place of others, but equally not allowing oneself to be overridden by others.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Take time to understand and assimilate what is new for him when he changes priory or is given a new responsibility, without attempting to redesign everything immediately.
- Open himself to the dynamics of the priory's relationships: valuing the positive dynamics, engaging in them and creating new ones; accepting elements that are difficult or damaging, so that he might discern how to deal with them constructively.
- Identify and accept the norms of the priory—or discuss them in chapter if necessary.

§3. The community will also play an important role:

- Every priory will define the responsibilities given to its brothers and the ways in which they are to be carried out in customaries that are to be regularly updated.
- The conventual chapter will set out the procedures for speaking at community meetings so that everyone can take their rightful place—and their rightful place alone.
- The prior will allow a newly assigned brother time to settle in and assimilate the particular local customs before taking on too many responsibilities.
- The Prior Provincial will help a brother take the place he is to have in the community if it is given him in a mission letter when he is assigned to a priory or a new role.
- During his canonical visit, the Prior Provincial or his delegate will pay particular attention to the way in which each brother has a place in the community.
- The province will set up formation in community relationships for priories that are in need, bringing in professionals if deemed appropriate, and remembering that, in the domain of fraternal life, "these human techniques are useful, but they are not sufficient" (FLC 33).

3. Putting one's talents at the service of the community

266. §1. Incorporation implies that every brother, with generosity and poverty of heart, places his natural abilities, gifts, and talents at the service of the community and is ready to acquire new skills to serve the community. "All the human resources are strengthened and brought together in the community project, motivating and respecting them" (SAO 20-c). Sharing gifts is an "interior requirement" for each member of the community (*cf.* FLC 42).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Make fraternal service a means of showing fraternal love and glorifying God in the footsteps of Christ (Jn 12:24-26).
- Learn to put his talents at the service of the common good, without taking centre stage but leaving space for those who are more discreet.

§3 The community also has a role to play:

- The prior and his council will discern the qualities and charisms of each brother and enable him to put them at the service of the community.
- The conventual chapter will give brothers the means to competently carry out the responsibilities they receive in the priory and will allow them, when appropriate, to benefit from (more or less) short-term external formation (accountancy, secretarial work, cooking, liturgy, singing, etc.).

III. BUILDING COMMUNITY LIFE

267. Community formation involves both receiving the community as a gift and working at “building communities ‘filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 13:52)” (FLC 11). “‘Synergy’ between the gift of God and personal commitment is required for building an incarnated communion, for giving, in other words, flesh and concrete existence to grace and to the gift of fraternal communion” (FLC 23).

1. Embracing the gift of community life

268. §1. Throughout our ongoing community formation we seek to embrace our fraternal life in common as a gift from God and an essential path for our holiness and consecration, a “schola amoris” where we learn to live by God's commandments and where our humanity matures (*cf.* FLC 25).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Open himself to being taught by the Spirit on a daily basis, so as to practise the new commandment (*cf.* Jn 13:34).
- Nourish himself on the Eucharist, from which "all education to the spirit of the community must take its origin" (PO 6).
- Allow his focus in the conventual Mass to shift from being centred on himself to being turned toward Christ, the true centre of the celebrating community, and to learn from Christ how to become a gift for his brothers and bread that is shared out.
- Participate in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation (*cf.* FLC 13), so that he might benefit from the treasures of redemption and so that every priory might be transformed into a community reconciled by Christ.
- Remember that the life of fraternal communion is necessary in order "to remain faithful to prayer, to maintain an authentic thirst for contemplation and to respond generously to all the demands of [his] apostolic life" (Const. 84).
- To be attached to community life, knowing that a religious "who seeks to lead an independent life, detached from the community, has certainly not taken the right path towards the perfection of his state" (VFC 24).

3. Building the priory community together

269. Life in community takes place first and foremost in the priory, which is the primary environment of our consecrated life. To build the local community of the priory, the brothers must agree on what they want to live together and how the priory will function.

a) Defining the priory's common values

270. §1. Every priory must learn to specify its guiding values, which will bring balance to the community. These must take into account: the charism of the Congregation, the law proper to the Congregation and the province, the mission of the priory and its agreement with the diocese, the composition of the priory formed by the responsibilities assigned to each of its members, and its cultural and logistical context. These different aspects will enable the brothers to develop together a vision of community life, which must be periodically reviewed, especially when conditions change (new missions, new assignments, etc.). In this way, the community will learn to define its boundaries.

§2. To this end, the conventual chapter of every priory will benefit greatly from reflecting on the following questions:

- How does the priory community envision fraternal relations within the priory (cooperation, gratuity, joint celebrations, sharing, time spent together, etc.)?
- What is the balance between personal and community life? What are the non-negotiable aspects of community life in the priory (presence at meals, at the Divine Office, at the various community activities)?

- How does the community envision decision-making within the priory (procedures between the prior, the chapter, and the council of the house)?
- Do the brothers in the priory share a common mission, and if so, how is everyone involved (potential conflict between priory and parish)?
- How does the community wish to get involved in the life of the province and the Congregation?
- How should the priory invest in ongoing formation at its various levels (religious, spiritual, human, intellectual, apostolic, community)?
- What does the community think a healthy priory looks like?
- How does the community envision the exercise of vows in its cultural and apostolic context?
- How and to what extent does the community engage in relations with other communities (local church, neighbouring parish, religious communities, neighbourhood, etc.)?
- How does the priory community prioritise the different elements of our life that may come into conflict (apostolic life, personal life, community life)?

b) Defining how the priory operates

271. Every priory must also determine timetables, procedures, and operating methods, as well as the distribution of tasks and responsibilities. Updating these various aspects will generally be undertaken during the conventual chapter at the beginning of the year.

3. Personal involvement in building the framework of the community

a) Getting involved in tasks and creating a supportive environment

272. **§1.** We seek to work at being "not only consumers of community, but above all its builders" (FLC 24). Every brother must foster a genuine love of the common good, have a sense of responsibility for the framework of community life, and engage in the tasks needed to establish a supportive environment.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Start by taking care of himself (health, personal hygiene, clothing) so that he will grow in self-respect and respect for others.
- Work to ensure that the community environment is marked by beauty, simplicity, and creative sobriety: home furnishings, table setting, etc.[150]
- Commit to keeping his cell and the community living space in good order, through regular cleaning and maintenance, etc.
- Develop the ability to help others and to allow others to help him, to fill in for others and to let others fill in for him.
- Draw on the help of qualified people, particularly lay people, to help him learn how to carry out his daily tasks as well as those tasks which are more out of the ordinary.

§3. When, within the same priory, we share moments of manual work in common, we strengthen our fraternal bonds, deepen our sense of the common good, and gain a concrete sense of belonging to the community.

150. Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, *Witnesses to the Beauty of God: The Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata 25 Years Later*, 25 March 2021, § "The enchantment of beauty": "that there be taste and decorum in the surroundings, so that everything in the dwelling may reveal the presence and centrality of God."

b) Building a joyful and deeply human environment

273. §1. It is equally down to each brother to develop an awareness of the importance of fraternal meetings, whether ordinary or gratuitous, to participate in them faithfully, and to commit himself to building a community life that is rich in humanity. Knowing how to celebrate together is a sign of the community's maturity. Times of community celebration and free time are opportunities for encounter, exchange, and laughter, enabling us to find in each other a source of joy. These moments of pause and reunion can become places of personal and community renewal and consolidate our fraternal life. They are important for incarnating fraternity in gratuity, so that every brother might come to know "How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers all together!" (Ps 132:1, JB).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Get involved in preparing community meetings.
- Cultivate the Gospel way of fraternal simplicity.
- Remember the important dates in the life of the community and the brothers (birthdays, anniversaries, feasts, jubilees).

4. Getting involved in community work

274. As well as our very practical day-to-day service, fraternal bonds are built up and strengthened by times of liturgical prayer, community intellectual work, and common apostolates.

a) Involvement in the liturgy

275. §1. Liturgical prayer is the eminent work of our fraternal life: it unites us in the same work and gives shape in the priory to a "shared sense" of the mysteries celebrated. Every brother therefore seeks to engage in the community liturgy by giving the best of what he has to offer and to discover in the liturgy the matrix of our life of fraternal communion.

§2. To deepen his participation in the liturgy, in addition to the aspects already mentioned,[151] we recommend that each brother:

- Refresh his understanding of the meaning of liturgical gestures and enact them with a prayerful heart.
- Cultivate the various aspects of our life together that have a liturgical character (meals, chapters, layout of our spaces, etc.) so that they might lead us to God.
- Engage with a generous spirit toward the quality, unity, and beauty of liturgical singing, especially during the Divine Office sung in common.

b) Involvement in community intellectual work

276. Every brother contributes to the quality of community life by taking part in community intellectual work. To engage more deeply in this, we recommend that each brother, in addition to the aspects already mentioned in the chapter on intellectual formation:

- Learn to give the fruits of his labour to his brothers and in turn to welcome their work in a fraternal manner, engaging with them in an intellectual dialogue that respects their discoveries and their efforts.

151. See chapter 7, n. 146.

- Show "courage to ground firmly one's own ideas while also opening oneself to new perspectives and to changing one's own point of view" (SAO 20-e).
- Maintain "freedom from prejudices, from excessive attachment to one's own ideas, from perceptual frameworks which are rigid or distorted and from strong positions which frustrate the diversity of opinions" (SAO 20-e).

c) Involvement in the priory's mission

277. §1. Living a common mission as brothers—whether a mission given to the priory as a whole or one shared by two or more brothers—gives rise to an intense moment of fraternity and a place of personal and community formation. We seek to learn to work together and to give witness to our fraternal unity in shared apostolic activities. Whether in joy or in the midst of trials, our common mission gives us the full experience of being a community of missionary disciples.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother, in addition to the means mentioned in the chapter on apostolic formation:

- Actively engage in the common mission of the priory and take an interest in the apostolates carried out by other brothers.
- Support the zeal of his brothers by listening to what they have to say about their mission, helping them to identify their gifts and strengthening their hope.

§3. The community will benefit greatly from a communal review of community apostolates, to celebrate the Lord's wonders, strengthen what is going well, and improve what could be done better.

5. Becoming part of the history of the priory

a) Learning about the history of the priory

278. §1. So that he might become a living stone of his priory, every brother has the responsibility to learn about its history (foundation, first missions, significant events, important people in the history of the priory, local Family of Saint John, etc.) and to work with the conventual chapter to give thanks for the marvels accomplished, all the while becoming increasingly lucid about the influences—sometimes negative—of the past.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Develop an awareness of the fact that every community has its own history, and that this history intersects with the history of each of its members.
- Take an interest in the stories told by those who have been assigned to the priory for longer than he has, or by people close to the priory (oblates, friends), and listen to the stories told by the community about its own history.
- Read the history of the priory as a sacred history, discerning in it God's guiding hand and the path of salvation upon which he leads the community.

§3. For its part, the priory community:

- Will actively remember its history through continual thanksgiving for everyday events in the community liturgy, through sincere and genuine fraternal dialogue on the key events in the life of the community, and through the celebration of the priory's anniversaries.
- Will take the time to pass on the history of the priory and its missions to newly assigned brothers and will ensure customaries are established.
- Will regularly update its archives.

b) Taking one's place in the priory's current history

279. In order to take his place in the life and mission of the priory, every brother will adapt his involvement to the contemporary context of the life of the community to which he has been assigned. Certain stages in the life of a priory require particular attention:

a) During the foundation of a priory: When founding a priory, we seek to put in place the necessary conditions to form a truly fraternal community and welcome God's call for mission. To this end, we recommend that each brother:

- Take time to listen and to discover, getting to know both the ecclesial context and the human environment in which the priory is located (visiting the region, meeting and getting to know people, learning the language and local customs).
- Take time to discern and to adjust, so that with the new priory emerges a new communion of brothers, which is able to balance its religious and missionary life according to its own specific context and needs.
- Engage in the proper functioning of the conventual chapter so that a real process of community discernment can take place.

b) When new brothers are assigned to a priory: When the composition of a priory is renewed, brothers are called to build new relationships, forge new habits, and implement a new way of organising things so that everyone can find their place in the community. To successfully navigate this recurring stage, we recommend that each brother:

- Reflect upon how open he is to new things, work towards accepting external change and the internal adjustments it involves.
- Reflect with his brothers on the dynamic and mission of the priory so that they can make the most of the situation and seek ways of building the future together.

c) A change of prior: This stage is at once a moment of joy, hope, and fear; it requires every brother to welcome and be open to the new prior and any changes that may occur in the running of the priory. Certain situations require special attention, such as when a brother is appointed prior for the first time or when it has been difficult to find a brother for this service. To go through this stage in a positive way, we recommend that each brother:

- Review the manner in which he practices his vows and the appropriateness of the way he relates to his superiors.
- Work with his brothers at bringing renewed impetus to fraternal life: Are our relationships healthy? What do we want to live together?

For his part, the prior can seek to adopt a position of service, taking the time to get to know each brother of the priory as well as the reality of community life and mission.

d) In times of crisis in the priory: It is crucial to have every brother fully engaged during times of crisis. A community whose balance has been knocked off kilter often needs support to get through the crisis and, if possible, find a positive outcome. To help resolve the crisis, we recommend that each brother:

- Be a peacemaker, aware that crises are a regular part of the life of individuals and groups and can allow for growth.
- Take the time to listen to everyone and participate with the conventual chapter in analysing the reasons for the crisis and devising ways of overcoming it.
- Ensure communication is benevolent and non-violent, so as to promote the smooth running of the priory.

e) At times of closure: Even if the reasons for the closure of a priory are understood and perceived as necessary, it is still a painful process both for the brothers who live there, or have lived there, and for the people connected with the priory. Each person involved must go through a grieving process that requires time and special personal and community support. The brothers must be able to count on the support and presence of their superiors, as well as people from outside the Congregation, if the need arises. To negotiate this delicate stage, we recommend that each brother:

- Undertake with his brothers a re-reading of their shared history so as to detect God's faithfulness in what might seem like failure.
- Express what he has experienced in the past and what he is currently going through, with a view to naming and overcoming difficulties, sadness, and anxiety.
- Bear in mind that the closure of the priory does not mean the gift each brother made of himself in their mission was made in vain.
- Prepare for a peaceful transition and help those close to the priory to come to terms with the reality that will follow the closure.

IV. FORMATION IN GOVERNANCE

280. Formation in governance applies above all to those who exercise authority.[152] Nevertheless, every brother would benefit from an introduction to governance which aims at "a personal and confident participation in the community's life and mission" (SAFC 14). The Church's teaching on religious life emphasises the need to commit to "appropriate involvement of the members in the government of the institute, for shared responsibility, and for subsidiarity".[153] This requires brothers to know the

152. See next section.

153. CICLSAL, *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life as applied to institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate*, 1983, 52; *cf.* Paul VI, Motu Proprio *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 1966, II, 18.

Institutions of the Congregation (1), participate in the community discernment of their priory (2), and practise subsidiarity in the exercise of all their duties (3).

1. Knowing and taking part in the Institutions of the Congregation

281. §1. "The various chapters (general, regional, and conventual) play an important role in responding to our common call" (GC 2022, Ch.). We seek to actively take part in these chapters and to know and exercise our rights and duties concerning the government of the Congregation or province.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Take an interest in the running of the community, and at the very least know the places in the Constitutions and the Code of Canon Law where he can find the references that relate to his collaboration in the government of the Congregation or province.
- Pray for the government of the Community and be prepared to participate in the various chapters of the province or Congregation.
- Obey the Constitutions and the decisions of the General Chapter.
- Cooperate in an appropriate manner with the authorities of the priory, the province and the Congregation.

2. Taking part in the conventual chapter

282. §1. The chapter is one of the main places in which the community is built up and gives rise to a number of situations in which each of us has to interiorly readjust. In chapter we seek to listen to the Holy Spirit with our brothers in community discernment in order to deepen our obedience to God.

§2. For discernment as a community to work well, certain rules need to be observed and put into practice:

a) Before any decision is taken, every member of the chapter should take time for prayer and personal reflection, preparing himself to "[listen] to what God is telling us within our situations" as a community (VN 50). Brothers must be mindful that their personal attachments do not hinder their sincere openness to God's will in community discernment.

b) The chapter's discernment is based on "correct and honest information, and the clarification of objections" (VN 20). A commitment to transparency is fundamental: all chapter members must have equal access to the information they need to make the best decisions together.

c) Community discernment presupposes that everyone has the right to speak and commits to speaking authentically, listening attentively and not imposing their ideas on others. Such an attitude encourages freedom of speech—particularly for the youngest or most self-effacing members—as well as constructive criticism. We must avoid attempts at persuasion and the logic of forming alliances, which "destroys the charismatic communion of the institutes and negatively affects the sense of belonging" (VN 20).

d) To aid the quality of discernment, it is important that the question raised is put in a simple way and that each person is given the chance to state the pros and cons as they see it, avoiding, at this preliminary stage, defending one solution over another, and taking each person's proposals seriously.

e) When the brothers come up against a difference of opinion, they will first of all consider this opposition as a "fruitful dissensus" that nourishes their discernment and opens the way to creative decision-making.

f) Every brother has to be prepared to choose and then participate in what has been decided, even if it was not the solution he first of all envisaged or wanted.

g) Reviewing and evaluating a decision taken and its implementation over time are also part of the process of community discernment. The test of time enables us to verify whether the decision taken was indeed the right one.

3. Learning to lead a group and to practise subsidiarity

283. §1. "Subsidiarity is among the most constant and characteristic directives of the Church's social doctrine"[154]; it has a positive side—trust in the intermediate levels of decision-making and appreciation of their competence—and a negative side—the obligation of the higher authority not to supplant the initiative, freedom, responsibility, and legitimate authority of the intermediate levels. The choice to live subsidiarity "as an exercise of reciprocal trust and generous collaboration of all and with all" (VN 31) is part of the prophetic witness of consecrated life.

§2. Whatever position we hold and whatever the level of responsibility entrusted to us—within the Community or in another group—we seek to implement the principle of subsidiarity by learning to delegate, encouraging co-responsibility and granting the appropriate corresponding autonomy, and taking seriously the obligations which correspond to our own level of responsibility.

§3. if a brother wishes to go further in his practice of subsidiarity, we recommend that he:

- Guarantee legitimate autonomy in decision-making to individuals or groups over whom he has authority, and endeavour to recognise that every brother, person, and intermediary body has something original to offer the community.[155]
- Avoid an excessively vertical exercise of authority, since this contradicts the practice of subsidiarity.
- Work towards a system of subsidiarity which respects the specific competence of each level and thereby maintains communion between all levels.
- Avoid unnecessary recourse to higher authority, which bypasses the intermediate levels.

154. Pontifical Council or Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, n. 185.
155. *Idem*, n. 187.

V. TAKING UP POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

284. Our style of governance, which involves the election of priors and a limited term of office, leads many brothers to take on successive responsibilities in the service of the Congregation, the province, or the priories. The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life recently noted that the responsibility of government, "so fundamentally important to community life, is sometimes assigned with improvisation and carried out improperly and incompletely" and that "[it] is becoming more and more important to include a serious initiation into government in continuous formation" (*cf.* VN 16).

1. Ongoing formation for priors

285. §1. As the government of the priory is exercised primarily in a collegial manner through the conventual chapter, formation in governance is not reserved to the prior alone; nevertheless, the exercise of authority requires its own specific initial formation. In addition to the elements already specified in Chapter 4 regarding the prior's concern for the formation of the brothers and of the community as a whole, the service of authority requires priors to be faithfully present among their brothers, as well as the ability to lead community life in conjunction with the conventual chapter.

§2. To deepen his formation, we recommend that each prior seek to:

- Undertake his office as a brother among brothers, ensuring care for each individual—himself included—without favouring the good of one brother over the others.
- Serve the good of the community for which he is responsible by listening to his brothers, aware that fraternal dialogue—including in the conventual chapter—will increasingly help him to better carry out his role, adjust his position, and serve the common good and the good of each individual.
- Improve his administrative skills, the way he leads meetings, and his people management skills. Although the office of prior cannot be reduced simply to leadership, these basic skills will make his service as prior run more smoothly, both for himself and for the community.
- Practise subsidiarity, understanding that he must take care of himself and take some rest if he is to continue effectively over the long term.
- Arrange supervision, either by joining a group of superiors for joint supervision or by finding a supervisor to review his work.

§3. The Prior Provincial will, for his part, support priors by:

- Providing them with an open ear and the tools they need to fulfil their service and helping them to meet the challenges of human and spiritual relationships their role entails.
- Defining the conditions for their formation and accompaniment in accordance with the vade-mecum drawn up by the Congregation.
- Bringing priors together on a regular basis to listen to them and allow them to talk to one another.
- Establishing formation sessions for priors, the programme and frequency of which will be set out in each ratio formationis provincialis.

§4. Well-functioning cooperation between the prior and the conventual chapter is a regulating factor in the governance of every priory. Fluid relations, dialogue, and the sharing of information make it possible to avoid extreme situations, such as the abuse of power, psychological games, pressure, etc.

2. Formation of brothers who are priors for the first time

286. §1. In order to accompany brothers who are elected or appointed prior for the first time, the province or Congregation will provide them with formation during the months preceding the beginning of their office or during their first year of service. For the implementation of this formation, we will gladly cooperate with other institutes, whilst taking care that the charism of each institute is respected.

§2. The aim of the formation is to provide new priors with some fundamental guidelines for undertaking their office. The formation will always include:

- Work on self-knowledge (What type of leader am I? What unconscious representations of authority and community are innately directing me?).
- Theological and spiritual insight into the meaning of the task entrusted to him and the way in which it can be a path of personal sanctification and an eminent service to his brothers.
- Basic formation in fraternal accompaniment and community discernment.
- An introduction to the fundamentals of Church law and the proper law of the Community with respect to authority.
- Aspects of his responsibility as superior in relation to the local Church and the civil authorities.
- Code of conduct for the transparent management of financial and material resources.
- Raising awareness of the need for proper archiving of administrative documents and the acts of the conventual chapter.

§3. The Prior Provincial will offer attentive and benevolent support to brothers who are exercising the office of prior for the first time. During their first year as prior, it is recommended that new priors seek out the advice of a more experienced brother and set up a network of advisors who are able to accompany him and review with him his first experiences of more challenging situations. Brothers with more experience will make themselves available for this purpose.

3. Formation of priors provincial

287. §1. The formation of priors provincial requires the acquisition of certain skills that are listed in the Vade1mecum for priors provincial. In addition to the spiritual dispositions linked to the exercise of his service, priors provincial will greatly benefit from formation in:

- Supervising the priories of their province in discerning their identity and goals (common life and mission).
- Conducting priory visits.
- Human resource management when assigning brothers.
- Supervising the collegial functioning of the province's conventual chapters.
- Crisis arbitration and mediation.

§2. To develop his skills and proficiency and carry out his service with an attentive ear to what the Lord is saying, we recommend that each prior provincial:

- Devote time to ongoing formation and take part in at least one formation session every year.
- Seek out formation and support that will help him to develop his skills of government (written material to read, groups where he can share and review his activity, coaching, formation sessions, supervision, etc.).
- Maintain a spiritual attitude of listening, creating an atmosphere that welcomes feedback and possible criticism from the brothers in his region, encouraging them to talk to him.

§3. The Prior General will monitor the long-term effectiveness of participation in programmes of formation or accompaniment for priors provincial.

VI. BECOMING MEN OF COMMUNION

288. "In virtue of the affinity which exists between religious life and the mystery of a Church, (...) religious, as 'experts in communion,' are 'called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and architects of the plan for communion which is the crowning point of human history in God's design'" (PI 25). We therefore seek to become men of communion, by "spreading the spirituality of communion, first of all in [our Congregation] and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries" (*cf.* VC 51), and by embodying unity and charity through concrete actions.

1. Living a spirituality of communion

289. §1. Living as brothers leads us to foster a spirituality of communion. This "indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us."[156] Our formation should enable us to contemplate the Trinitarian communion that is at the root of the Church, to become "instruments of [Christ's] love and builders of his Kingdom in communion with all the other vocations in the Church" (SAFC 21).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Seek in communion a guiding principle for their spiritual growth and their commitment to the Church and the world[157]; make community life a school of charity in order to grow in love and service of God and his brothers (*cf.* VFC 35).
- Maintain "an effective and affective relationship with the Bishops, primarily with the Pope, the center of unity of the Church and with his Magisterium" (SAFC 32).
- Work towards a climate of communion in which "priests, religious and laity, far from ignoring each other or coming together only for a common activity, can once again find the just relationships of communion and a renewed experience of evangelical communion and mutual charismatic esteem resulting in a complementarity which respects the differences." (SAFC 31).
- Live by "the Christian community's ability to make room for all the gifts of the Spirit"[158] and welcome every vocation as a gift from God.

2. Building communion within the Family of Saint John

290. §1. Beyond the setting of the Congregation of the Brothers of Saint John, our mission to live as people of communion applies first and foremost to the Family of Saint John. We thus seek to become artisans of communion within our own spiritual family by building bonds of fraternity and cooperation with the Contemplative Sisters, the Apostolic Sisters, and the Oblates of Saint John, at the service of the Church and its mission.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

156. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 43
157. *Idem.*
158. *Idem*, n. 46.

- Build communion in the Family of Saint John, respecting the respective states of life and charisms of the Sisters and the Oblates, welcoming their differences as an enrichment of our charism and vocation.
- Create opportunities for encounter and fraternal cooperation to incarnate this communion.
- Apply mutatis mutandis all the recommendations of this chapter to his relationships with Sisters and Oblates.

3. Becoming a sign of communion for the Church

291. **§1.** "Community is the first and most believable gospel that we can preach."[159] The way in which we live together must become a witness to (*cf.* Jn 13:35), and sign of, the communion willed by Christ. "In this way the characteristic climate of the church as God's family, an environment which facilitates mutual knowledge, sharing and the contagion of those very values which are at the origin of the choice to give one's whole life to the cause of the Kingdom, is created" (SAFC 16).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to honour God in his neighbour, God whose temples we have become.[160]
- Work to "humanise our community" by striving to "build friendship between [ourselves], family life, love among [us]".[161]
- Strive to make the liturgical prayer of the Hours and the celebration of the Eucharist "a house and a school of communion" (RC 25).
- Make our intercultural common life "a witness to the universality of the Christian message" (RC 29).

4. Artisans of God's plan for communion in the world

292. **§1.** Formation in community living should also lead us to take our place in each community to which we belong: our diocese, parish or educational community, family, neighbourhood, etc. It should make us artisans of the Church's work of communion in the areas of ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue (*cf.* VC 102), and universal brotherhood.

§2. To this end, we recommend that each brother:

- Make our life of fraternal communion "an example of people living together in communion" (SAFC 18).
- Develop a "new creativity of charity (...) in a spirit of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue" (SAFC 4).
- Foster "practical and concrete love for every human being", in the knowledge that "charity of its nature opens out into a service that is universal".[162]

159. CICLSAL, *Rejoice! A Letter to consecrated men and women*, 2014, n. 9.
160. *Cf. Rule of Saint Augustine*, I, 8; SAFC 29.
161. CICLSAL, *Rejoice*, n. 9
162. John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49.

Chapter 12
APOSTOLIC FORMATION

293. §1. Apostolic witness is a constitutive dimension of our life as baptized and consecrated persons (*cf.* VC 72). Whether through our actions or through the secret union of our heart, everything in our lives must enable us to participate in the mission of Christ, "the faithful and true witness" (Rev 1:5; 3:4), and to associate ourselves with his prophetic and royal priesthood, through which he glorifies the Father and saves mankind (*cf.* Jn 17:4; 3:17). Our mission therefore draws on all the dimensions of formation and gives them new impetus: "The desire to be at the service of the mission of the Church inhabits the other dimensions of our lives" (GC 2019).

§2. We thus seek to enter into the sentiments of the heart of Christ the Apostle (I), in order to respond in the most appropriate way possible to the solicitations of the Church (II), transmitting to others what we have contemplated (III), and leading the Christian communities entrusted to us in a spirit of service (IV). To this end, we learn to develop genuine apostolic spiritual discernment, scrutinising God's will and the solicitations of his people (V), and learn to renew and consolidate our formation to allow us to engage in mission over the long-term (VI).

I. PARTAKING IN THE HEART OF CHRIST THE APOSTLE

293. Jesus, who was sent by the Father and consecrated in the truth, is the model we seek to follow in our apostolate. Throughout our lives, we wish to let Jesus shape our hearts in the image of his heart by frequenting the living word of God, praying, and listening to the Spirit so that we can be his Apostles. The prayer that Jesus addressed to his Father during his final hour (*cf.* Jn 17) sets the tone for all our apostolic commitments and guides our deepest intentions.

1. Participating in the compassion of Christ the Good Shepherd

294. §1. In order to maintain a living communion with Christ in our apostolate, we seek above all to conform our intentions to the sentiments of Christ the Good Shepherd, who freely gave his life for mankind (*cf.* Jn 10:18).

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother meditate on the Gospels and try to hear in the Spirit the love that animates the heart of the Good Shepherd for his sheep.

2. Participating in the zeal of Christ the Apostle

295. §1. In order to participate in Christ's zeal and his eagerness to bear witness to the truth, we aim to deepen our apostolic creativity and boldness, following his example. We therefore seek to hear the cries that rise up from the world and the thirst that people have for God, for His light, His justice, and His love; to respond to people's hopes and aspirations, not out of human ambition, but for the sake of the Gospel (*cf.* 1 Cor 9:16); and to participate in Christ’s mission as prophet.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother[163]:

- Go out to meet people and communities and listen to the Holy Spirit to discover their deepest spiritual desires.
- Transform the zeal of youth into fervour that perseveres, enabling us not to be discouraged by an apparent lack of results. Following a long life and in the maturity of his latter years, John presents himself in the Book of Revelation as our companion in perseverance and in trial (*cf.* Rev 1:9).
- Draw on the wisdom of the Cross, which gives us the hope of bearing fruit beyond any failure and contradiction, and nurture eschatological hope in the One who makes "all things new" (Rev 21:5).

3. Interceding with Christ the High Priest

297. §1. Christ invites us to intercede with him for all people and to bring down God's blessings upon them; he wants us to develop a priestly heart. In response, we learn to unite ourselves to Christ's intercession for the world.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Intercede for others in the celebration of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, the recitation of the Rosary, and contemplative prayer.
- Meditate on Christ's intercession in the Gospels and become imbued with the great prayer of the beloved Son to his Father (*cf.* Jn 17).
- Follow the example of the Virgin Mary as mediatrix, interceding with her as at Cana and in the Upper Room, asking for the grace to become a channel of blessing like she was at the Visitation.

II. SERVING THE CHURCH IN ITS MISSION

1. Receiving our mission from the Church

298. §1. Constituted missionary disciples through our baptism and made prophetic signs through our religious consecration, we accept our missions from the Church through the mediation of our superiors, in accordance with the charism of our Congregation. We seek to learn to work at the service of the Church, respecting the boundaries of our missions and acting in trust and obedience to the Church's pastors.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Receive his assignment and apostolic duties as a calling from the Church and draw support from the grace of state.

163. It is worth remembering that in this chapter, as in the whole of Part Two, this formula introduces suggestions for concrete ways of implementing the formation objective set out in the first paragraph.

- Make his own the challenges and concerns of local pastors and the universal Church by seeking ways to implement their various pastoral initiatives.
- Clearly recognise the scope and limits of the mission in which he is involved, so as to avoid making it too much his own project.

§3. The authorities of the Congregation will foster a sense of ecclesial integration by clearly defining the missions of the brothers and, as far as possible, drawing up mission letters following dialogue with the brothers themselves and local Church figures.

2. Adopting the attitude of a servant

299. §1. We have been appointed to bear witness to Christ and the Gospel, and we are God's "collaborators"; through our apostolic service, we might plant or water, but it is God who gives the growth (*cf.* 1 Cor 3:9). We are, for our part, aware that we are "mere servants" (Lk 17:10). We therefore seek to cultivate an interior poverty with regard to our apostolate and relinquish all control over the work of God.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Fully give himself to the responsibilities entrusted to him and, at the same time, believe that it is the Spirit who is the main artisan of his apostolate.
- Persevere and keep up the effort when the apostolate demands more of him, while also ensuring that he gets rest and regains his strength.
- Avoid measuring the fruitfulness of his efforts by purely human criteria or by tangible results alone, maintaining a heart that is free when it comes to the fruits of his apostolate.
- Ensure that he is accountable to the relevant authority for what he does and how he does it, and hand over his duties at the end of his mandate, stepping aside with humility.

3. Being formed so that our service might be one of quality

300. §1. We seek to carry out the missions entrusted to us with the seriousness they demand and learn to identify the specific skills we need to fulfil our mission (whether as a parish priest, schoolteacher, spiritual accompanier, sacramental and liturgical pastoral leader, youth leader, etc.).

§2. In order to offer a competent and proficient service, every brother will be given the opportunity, when appropriate, to undertake specific formational training (prior to or in parallel with the activity), benefit from evaluation or regular assessment, and regularly bring his formation up to date (current direction of the Church's mission, ways of carrying out pastoral work, tools for evangelisation).

§3. As far as possible, the Community will provide the means for a brother to receive formation and bring himself up to date every time he receives a new mission. The province will regularly organise sessions and formation on questions relating to pastoral ministry and evangelisation. The brothers will willingly take part in diocesan formation or formation offered by other Church structures (Catholic universities, formation centres, etc.).

4. Learning to cooperate and "feel in harmony with the Church"

301. §1. Because the service of the Church and mission are by nature community actions, we seek to develop a sentire cum Ecclesia, that is, "an active solidarity with the Church, coming from the heart, a feeling of fellowship with other members of the faithful and with the Church as a whole, and an instinct thereby for what the needs of and dangers to the Church are. (...) [This necessary attitude] unites all the members of the people of God as they make their pilgrim journey."[164] It enables them to "walk together" along the path of evangelisation. Learning to cooperate in the Church is a fundamental element of our ongoing apostolic formation.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Convert any individualism or clericalism he may harbour to a spirituality of communion and ecclesial action that is truly synodal.
- Obey the Church's juridical wisdom in its missionary activity, which, by providing precise rules, "averts any temptation to arbitrariness or unjustified claims".[165]
- Strive to collaborate well with the other labourers in the Lord's vineyard and practise subsidiarity.
- Ensure that collaborative structures are not collaborative in name only but are animated by a spirituality of communion based on "conversion of heart and mind" and "disciplined training for welcoming and listening to one another".[166]

III. PASSING ON TO OTHERS WHAT WE HAVE CONTEMPLATED

302. §1. The spiritual experience specific to the charism of our Institute helps us to sense the presence of God as a gift that gives us life and that we want to pass on to others. Our entire mission is marked by the dynamic expressed in the prologue to the first epistle of John: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life [...] we proclaim [...] to you".[167]

§2. To enter into this particular style of apostolate, we must bear witness to a living faith that emanates from an encounter and develop discipline so that we only pass on the truth of the contemplated Lord and not our mere opinions. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman is a paradigmatic point of reference for our apostolic life.

1. Letting ourselves be evangelised and bearing witness to what we have seen

303. §1. Our apostolic formation is rooted in a living encounter with Christ. By letting ourselves join in Christ's mission, we embrace the Father's plan manifested in him and seek to bear witness to it. This implies a constant to-and-fro between being evangelised ourselves and bearing witness to others and requires us to live our religious life as a constant self-evangelisation: "The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself." (EN 15)

---

164. International Theological Commission, *Sensus fidei* in the life of the Church, 2014, n. 90.
165. John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 45.
166. *Cf.* International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 2018, n. 107.
167. *Cf.* 1 Jn 1, 1-4; DV 1; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 188, a. 6.

§2. To go further in this aspect, in addition to the means used in spiritual formation (chapter 7), we recommend that each brother:

- Let himself be filled with the joy that comes from the Gospel and from encountering Jesus (*cf.* EG 1). It is this joy that impels us to evangelise and gives us "an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench." (EN 80).
- Be vigilant of heart to transmit the message of Christ and his Church and not that of someone else.
- Ask for the sermo sapientiae in his testimony and preaching, to allow the Holy Spirit to speak in him and through him.

2. Formation in accompaniment, preaching, and teaching

304. Accompaniment, preaching, and teaching are three privileged forms of apostolic action that serve human and Christian formation in line with our charism. We seek to use these forms of apostolate to lead the people entrusted to us to Christ. These three types of apostolates, which take very different forms depending on our mission, are part of our vocation; that is why every brother must form himself in these areas according to his needs, based on the following elements of this text, and willingly complete his formation by reading or attending sessions offered by the local Church or other institutes.

a) Formation in accompaniment

305. §1. Accompaniment is an eminent means of human and Christian formation and constitutes a form of evangelisation (*cf.* EG 24). It takes on many different forms of activity: leading a team, a group, or an ecclesial community, the Christian education of a group of young people or children, pastoral accompaniment in a parish, the sacramental listening of confession, spiritual accompaniment, etc.

§2. Although not every brother is called to exercise the ministry of spiritual accompaniment,[168] every brother must learn to accompany people in their various apostolic activities. Whatever his mission, every brother therefore seeks to acquire the human and spiritual qualities that will enable him to walk with people towards the Lord.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to balance closeness and distance with those he meets by knowing how to get involved so as not to be a cold and indifferent spectator, whilst at the same time cultivating respect for the intimacy of their conscience and their freedom.
- Awaken his "desire [...] to bring to fruition what [God] has sown in our lives." (EG 171).
- Seek to bring people to a point of spiritual and human maturity that enables them to make truly free and responsible decisions.
- Seek to enlighten people on the basis of sound doctrine.
- Develop the patience needed for people to grow and accept long periods of waiting, so that they can move towards a full appropriation of the Christian mystery, find their place in the Church, and develop missionary activity.

§4. The Community endeavours to provide the brothers in initial formation with qualified spiritual accompaniment, both on a personal and a community level, so that accompaniment becomes a way of life before being a mission. In the houses of formation and in the apostolic priories, we seek to develop particular attention to fraternal accompaniment and to spiritual discernment in common.

168. See the COFASA document, *Commission on the formation for spiritual accompaniment and affectivity* (2019-2022).

Every brother must receive a spiritual, human, and intellectual formation that gives him an authentic understanding of human growth in its various dimensions and thus supports his pastoral work.

b) Formation in preaching

306. §1. Preaching takes many forms: liturgical homilies, retreats, recollections, catechesis, exhortations within a prayer group, dialogue with the contemporary world, etc. It cannot be reduced to teaching or the simple transmission of information[169]; its principal object is always the divine word, and it must encourage genuine conversion and a heartfelt acceptance of the revealed Truth.

§2. In order to deepen our practice of this ministry, we will learn to prepare our sermons in such a way that we are able to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit both in preparation and when we preach.

§3. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Prepares by listening attentively to the word of God.
- Seeks to speak from the heart and allows the Holy Spirit to work within him, learning to distinguish a spiritual motion from passing intuitions.
- Resists dressing up laziness in preparation as availability to divine inspiration.
- Makes sure that what he says responds to the deepest aspirations of his listeners, is educational, and adapted to the context in which he finds himself.
- Works on his style, elocution, and oratory skills to facilitate transmission.

§4. Certain types of preaching require specific formation:

a) The liturgical homily entails an essential mystagogical dimension, which requires a link to be made between the word of God, the mystery being celebrated, and the liturgical action that is taking place. Every clerical brother must be open to people's comments about his preaching, and periodically revisit his concept and practice of the homily based on formation courses, books, or the teachings of the Church.

b) When a brother preaches a retreat, his preaching must be based on reading the word of God and on spiritual and pastoral experience: the aim is not only to enlighten but also to help people experience God's presence and love, to help them hear God calling them, choose to respond, and take the necessary steps to do so.

c) Formation in teaching

307. §1. Teaching requires not only doctrinal preparation, but also pedagogy that takes on different forms depending on the various types of activity: courses and lectures to different audiences, leading seminars, accompanying students, publishing articles or books, giving talks at camps or with various groups, etc. Teaching is not confined to lectures, but can take the form of debates, discussion groups, tutorials, etc.

§2. Teaching is an essential means of our apostolate of human and Christian formation. That is why every brother must be prepared to teach in one way or another. In order to progress in our formation, we will learn to discern who it is we are addressing, what we want to transmit, and how we want to transmit it.

169. *Cf.* Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, *Directory for Catechesis*, 2020, n. 29; *cf.* Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, n. 25.

§3. To deepen this skill, we recommend that each brother:

- Be attentive to whom he is addressing, take stock of the characteristics of his audience, establish a relationship of trust with them, know how to prepare them to listen sympathetically, measure his expression, arguments, and the exposition of his reasoning according to the capacity of his audience.
- Look after himself: take stock of the possible stress encountered in preparation, the self-assurance needed to teach with confidence, his physical and psychological conditioning, his concentration and immediate readiness to teach, his emotions before, during and after teaching, and review his experience, etc.
- Prepare the content of his teaching with seriousness and humility, without trying to shine, but accepting a certain sobriety.
- Implement the basics of communication in teaching:
    - Ask himself what he wants people to remember when they leave the session.
    - Measure the material to be communicated and the time to be spent on it according to the preceding point.
    - Present what he has to teach by concentrating on the central message and avoiding getting lost in the details.
    - Ensure that listeners or readers understand what he is trying to say by using an outline and explaining the key questions behind his reasoning.
    - Learn to involve people as much as possible by asking questions, giving examples, and challenging them, in order to awaken their intelligence and maintain their attention.
    - Review his presentation and check whether his objectives have been achieved.
- Position himself as someone who is searching rather than someone who already knows, accept contradiction, learn to accept objections, accept not having every answer, and encourage critical feedback on his teaching so that he might progress.
- Discern what might interfere with his teaching (logistical conditions, the mood of the audience, insufficient preparation, personal difficulties, etc.).

3. Catering for those with a thirst for formation

308. §1. "The thirst for truth is so rooted in the human heart that to be obliged to ignore it would cast our existence into jeopardy." (FR 29) We therefore seek to offer appropriate types of doctrinal apostolate (preaching and teaching), which allow us to accompany people in a particular way, educating them in their prayer and sacramental life, leading them to a contemplative love of the Eucharist, and fostering growth in their thirst for wisdom, practice of mercy, and love for the poor.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Keep his own thirst for formation alive, knowing how to nourish it and reap the benefits.
- Develop active listening skills to help people express their spiritual thirst.
- Propose apostolates in formation when he sees the opportunity, without, however, reducing a mission to this dimension alone and without imposing it on people who want or need something else.

4. Learning to awaken and accompany vocations

309. §1. Every consecrated person is, "by nature, also a vocation animator: one who is called cannot not become a caller. There is, therefore, a natural link between ongoing formation and vocation animation" (SAFC 16). As a result of cultural diversity, the socio-cultural context, and the frequent lack of maturity of candidates, vocations ministry today requires greater investment of our energies. It is up to each and every brother to learn how to awaken vocations and provide those interested with the necessary accompaniment in the first stages of their discernment.

§2. To encourage the awakening and accompaniment of vocations, we recommend that each brother:

- Undertake formation in accompaniment that helps people to listen to where the Lord is calling them, by listening to their deepest questions, respecting their freedom, and refraining from discerning their vocation for them.
- Not shy away from speaking of the vocation to consecrated life with Gospel boldness, without falling into a logic of recruitment or being overly timid.
- Take an interest in the local Church's general guidelines for the pastoral care of vocations.
- Avoid working exclusively in community and cooperate with diocesan or national vocations ministry teams.

§3. For its part, every province will:

- Highlight the vocational significance of all apostolic activity and provide all the brothers with formation in vocations ministry.
- Designate vocation leaders or promoters for priories and/or provinces, who must undergo specific training for their mission.
- Develop an action plan that will help each conventual chapter to implement a vocational spirit adapted to its field of mission.

5. Learning to be apostles with our brothers and to bear witness through our fraternal communion

310. §1. Bearing fruit is an essential requirement of Christian and ecclesial life (*cf.* Jn 15:1-5). We aim to respond to this requirement by fostering "missionary communion" among us, bearing fruit both through mission and fraternal charity. We therefore seek to offer witness together, to develop a community apostolate, and to make our fraternal communion a place of prayer, charity, and light.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Ensure he carries out his apostolic activities in conjunction with the brothers of his priory, to participate in the apostolic mission of the community, and to make his apostolate a place of fraternal cooperation.
- Talk about his apostolates with his brothers, not hesitating to share his experiences and ask for advice.
- Try to make his priory a place of prayer and communion, so that it might be a spiritual resource for the diocese and for other Christian communities.[170]

170. *Cf. Acts 2019*, "Elements of our charism" (*Quelques éléments de notre charisme*), n. II.

- Accept what the people of God and those close to the priory have to say about fraternal relations and community apostolates.

§3. Each conventual chapter will benefit from regularly evaluating the way in which community life and community apostolic activities are fruitful for the local Church, as well as from reflecting on the means of bearing witness as a community. The prior plays a vital role in sustaining zeal in this fraternal dimension of apostolic life.

§4. Experiences of apostolic work carried out in common must be intentionally undertaken starting from the time of initial formation, so that brothers gain a rooted and deepened sense of community witness.

IV. SERVING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

1. Learning to pass on the essential elements of the Christian life

311. §1. We must learn to serve the communities entrusted to us by communicating to them the essential elements of Christian life: initiation into prayer and the sacraments; experience of fraternal communion and love of the Church; receiving the word of God and embracing the teaching of the faith; offering service to the Christian community or those in need; commitment to mission. These different aspects must grow simultaneously; by learning to develop each element for itself and in union with the others, we will lead the disciples of Christ in an effective and comprehensive approach.

§2. This means we must acquire specific talents in apostolic work, talents we must develop starting in initial formation and deepen throughout our ongoing formation. Every brother must therefore:

- Familiarise himself with sacramental pastoral care and develop the capacity to provide instruction in prayer (liturgical or personal).
- Be able to lead the faithful in a simple reading of the word of God and provide them with some basic points of reference.
- Be able to explain the Creed and the Christian faith simply, so that people understand that they are themselves part of salvation history.
- Be able to communicate the principles of Christian morality in a clear and lively way.
- Learn how to lead people to offer self-giving service, not only in order to help the Christian community, but also to benefit their personal growth.
- Foster fraternal communion by bringing people together and being an agent of unity.
- Bear witness to his love for the Church and help the faithful to love the Church by finding their place and mission in it.
- Encourage engagement in apostolic work by calling the faithful to mission and supporting their missionary initiatives.

§3. The essential elements mentioned above are found in every Christian vocation, including that of the Brothers of Saint John; our charism therefore has the power to guide the faithful in their education in the Christian life. We learn, however, to leave each member of the faithful free to discover how their own spiritual journey will take shape within the Church.

2. Listening to the needs of the people and communities we serve

312. §1. We want to be able to become part of the communities to whom we are sent and be able to identify their needs by listening attentively to the people who form them, learning about their customs and their traditions.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Learn to become close to the people and understand something of their lives, listening to what they need in order to grow as Christians.
- Be mindful that the Lord is already present in people's lives and that the brother's apostolate is part of a story that God mysteriously leads.
- Try to remember that we too are members of God's people, and "far from trying to appear better than others, we should 'in humility count others better' than ourselves (Phil 2 :3)" (EG 271).
- Make use of surveys and question local Church figures about the surrounding Christian communities to find out about the specific needs and solicitations of each of these groups, and the formation that might be required to accompany them.
- Use end-of-activity or end-of-year reviews to assess the quality of apostolic work and improve the way it responds to the needs of individuals and communities.

3. Fostering gifts and charisms

313. §1. In his providence, the Lord gives each Christian community all the charisms it needs to live, to carry out its mission, and to adapt to the situations it encounters. It is up to those responsible for leading the community, in conjunction with the pastors of the local Church, to recognise, discern, and encourage the charisms of the different members of this body (*cf.* LG 12)—starting with their own—and to help each member of the community to allow the Spirit to work in and beyond them.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Enter into his heart and identify how he might make the graces he has received bear fruit for others—for it is by discerning one's own charisms that we become familiar with the way in which the Spirit works through these spiritual gifts.
- Learn to identify the spiritual fruits of the initiatives and actions of the faithful—for themselves and for others—so that he might recognise their charisms through and beyond their human qualities.
- Verify and value charisms by trying to recognise both the ordinary charisms of service and the extraordinary charisms such as the gift of tongues, prophecy, etc.
- Accompany the faithful to help them "always to use [their] charisms with Christian humility, with firm self – control and with the intention, above all else, to help build up the entire community which each particular charism is meant to serve." (PDV 31).
- Keep in mind and teach the faithful that "all charisms are important in the eyes of God. At the same time, no one is irreplaceable." In this way, we shall come to realise that we need one another, for "each gift received is fully realized when it is shared with one's brothers and sisters, for the good of all."[171]

§3. Those who exercise the service of authority at the various levels of the Congregation (general, provincial, local) must take care to discern the authentic charisms of the brothers according

171. Pope Francis, *General Audience of 1st October 2014*.

to the criteria of the Church,[172] to embrace them with joy and gratitude, to generously encourage them, to accompany them, and to exercise paternal watchfulness over their orderly exercise in the ecclesial communion.[173] The experience of a sound economy of charisms within the Congregation will help a brother to govern the charismatic life of the communities entrusted to him.

4. Being attentive to young people, couples, families, and those in need

314. Although our mission places us at the service of all God's people, our charism impels us in a particular way toward young people, couples, families, and those in need. This focus requires a permanent, ongoing apprenticeship and formation. In all the communities entrusted to our care, we pay particular attention to these demographics, without neglecting other groups and individuals.

a) Being attentive to young people

315. §1. We seek to give young people the support they need as they grow in maturity and make their first commitments in life. We are conscious that Saint John is a Gospel icon who can inspire their journey and help them discover "the fullness of the joy of life and love, making a gift of oneself and participating in the proclamation of the Good News."[174]

§2. To better prepare for this apostolate, we recommend that each brother involved in work with young people:

- Keep abreast of developments in society and among young people.[175]
- Take on the role of an accompanier, knowing how to be close to young people without becoming inordinately familiar with them, positioning himself as an adult and consecrated religious among the youth.
- Learn to establish a framework that fosters their growth and guarantees their safety.
- Acquire the qualities required of a youth worker and undertake professional training if the mission requires it.

b) Being attentive to couples and families

316. §1. We are attentive to God's plan for couples and families, and want to become centres of prayer, charity, and light for them. We make every effort to be close to families, giving them a space to be listened to, to have a Christian experience as a family, and to be supported in their mission of integral education.

§2. To this end, we recommend that every brother who is responsible for looking after families:

- Provide them with a simple formation programme that lays out the basics of the Christian life and connects easily with the concrete realities of life, as well as criteria for evangelical discernment in relation to the prevailing culture and contemporary society.

172. *Cf.* Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, no. 18.
173. *Cf. Idem*, n. 8-9.
174. *Young people, faith and vocational discernment. Preparatory Document of the Synod of Youth*, 2017, Introduction.
175. On accompanying young people, see Pope Francis, *Christus vivit* (2019).

- Put together—with the priory's brothers if viable—a framework that enables families to deepen their Christian life and enables them to recharge their batteries through prayer, simple charity, a space to rest, etc.
- Learn how to put families in touch with each other in order to encourage mutual support and the communal experience of the Church.

§3. Caring for families also means being attentive to the couples who are the foundation of the family, to those who are journeying towards marriage, to single people who find not being in a relationship a cause of suffering, and to those who are experiencing the difficulties of married life.

c) Being attentive to the poor

317. §1. We recognise in those in need an image of Christ destitute on the Cross, and we want to convey the Church's preferential option for the poor. Our formation must enable us to "let ourselves be evangelised by them (...) and to embrace the mysterious wisdom that God wishes to share with us through them"; "to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them" (EG 198).[176]

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Recognise that he himself is poor, avoid seeing himself as being above others, and accept that the poor are his lords and masters.
- Grow in his awareness of what the poor offer him and ask for the grace to recognise Christ in them, even when they seem unattractive.
- Draw on the expertise of communities or associations with proven experience to find the right position to adopt in relation to the poor and to identify the help they need.
- Agree to make room in his budget and timetable for unforeseen events arising from their requests.

6. Learning to lead a group

318. §1. Because many apostolates are carried out through group activities, every brother needs to acquire the art of leading a group to maturity. We need to develop a Christian vision of the group as a community experience of fraternity and of the Church and learn to discern how to integrate techniques of leading meetings, delegation, and leadership.

§2. To go further in this aspect, in addition to the elements mentioned in community formation, we recommend that each brother:

- Discover where his gifts lie, so that he might discern his most suited style of apostolic leadership and how he might best be complemented by others.
- Seek to foster a gospel experience of Christian fraternity by applying Christian principles of leading a group (seeking the common good, equity, solidarity, consideration for the most important need, respect for subsidiarity, balance between mercy and justice).
- Develop skills in cooperative relationships (non-violent communication, flow of information and communication, etc.) and organisation (defining objectives, planning activities,

176. Translator's note: The French translation of this passage in EG ends "to understand them", rather than "to speak for them". The (presumably) original Spanish word used is "interpretalos", which could be translated either way, although it is noteworthy that the German and Italian translations both opted for "to understand them".

scheduling tasks to be undertaken, preparing the site and tools needed, taking into account the quality of the environment, etc.).

- Follow a specific formation course (leading youth camps, pastoral care for families, etc.).

IV. FORMING APOSTOLIC DISCERNMENT

319. §1. Discernment is an essential driving force in our apostolic formation. It positions us in an attitude of listening to God's will and of service and gives us greater assurance of responding to God's call. Discernment involves learning to look, interpret, and choose.

§2. Formation in discernment enables us to make informed judgements about changing situations in our missions (1) and to listen to the Lord and people's needs by carrying out genuine discernment at the spiritual, apostolic, personal (2), or community level (3). Formation in discernment involves learning to take the time needed (4) and learning to review past experiences to feed into future discernment (5).

1. Maturing in one's pastoral judgement

320. §1. Our apostolic formation must enable us to accompany people in their growth in the Christian life and help them to recognise God's call. This requires that we develop pastoral prudence, which will help us to judge the situations we encounter and translate Christ's call so as to adapt it to the concrete lives of those we serve, taking into account their current situation and past history, while respecting the law of gradualness. It is not just a question of distinguishing between good and evil, or opposing the positive and the negative, but above all of reaching "Gospel" discernment—"which is done in the light and strength provided by the true and living Gospel, which is Jesus Christ, and in virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit" (PDV 10). Every brother who accompanies groups and individuals must grow in the maturity of their pastoral judgment.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Familiarise himself with the Gospel, allowing it to arouse in his heart the charity of Christ who gives himself to the Church, and allowing it to determine his way of thinking, speaking, acting, and entering into apostolic relationships.
- Seek to bear witness to the Gospel in its entirety, respecting people's freedom, leading everyone toward a better understanding of Christian law, and remembering that, without charity, anything he says will ring hollow (*cf.* 1 Cor 13).
- Enlighten people's conscience, taking into account: 1° the object and objective moral value of an act; 2° the end and intention of an act; 3° the circumstances of an act and the person's history.
- Observe how far the person has come as well as the distance still to travel, and get a sense of the "tempo" of travel of the person who is talking to him.
- Ensure his pastoral discernment is a process that is not "closed," but one that remains dynamic and open to new stages and decisions.

§3. Because of the concrete nature of pastoral situations, those responsible for initial formation in the apostolic field will avoid inventing, in a virtual way, increasingly complicated and theoretical cases which generate discussion and debate; rather, they will favour group analysis of real situations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who enlightens all reality, respecting what each person has to say and ways of acting and thinking that are not their own.

2. Learning to discern our missions and the direction of apostolic work

321. §1. Any brother who receives a mission must learn to discern the direction in which to take it and the project that should be implemented. Apostolic spiritual discernment enables us to identify opportunities and to discern which of them should be put in place so that our apostolic activities fall ever more in line with Christ's Gospel plan, the direction of work of our pastors, and the signs of the times.

§2. Apostolic discernment involves several stages, which can be marked out as follows: an examination of the situation, a choice of direction, prayer, a decision taken by the authority, and obedience to that decision.

a) Examining the situation

322. §1. Listening to God's call requires first of all that we be attentive to the reality of things, to the challenges of the world, to the cry of the poor; that we become aware of what the Holy Spirit is already doing; that we seek to hear God. We must also make every effort to gather the information we need and to base our examination on as accurate an analysis of the situation as possible; this requires an effort of reflection that can be supported by sociological studies or expertise.

§2. Our examination must take into account the direction of the pastoral projects of the universal and local Church, the mission of our own priory, the charism of the Congregation, and our own personal capacities and charisms.

b) Choosing with complete inner freedom

323. §1. Analysis of the situation will lead to one or more proposals being put forward which we must receive in a spirit of availability, but also detachment, developing a holy indifference with regard to the choice of the various possibilities presented and their eventual implementation. We then ask the Lord to help us to see which apostolic direction will most further his work that is already underway and most benefit his glory, as well as the people to whom we are sent. This requires that we develop inner freedom and that we renounce our own will so that we are ready to be sent where the Lord wants us.

§2. In order to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit and not by the spirit of the world within us, we should be careful to check where our attachments lie and where the desires that dwell in us lead. Life in accordance with our vows should help us maintain a heart that is chaste, poor, and obedient, in order to discern and choose the apostolic activities that will enable us to fulfil the Father's will.

§3. This interior freedom requires a clear awareness that God does not necessarily ask us to respond to every apostolic opportunity.

c) Surrendering our plans to God in prayer

324. Having determined in our hearts what seems to us to be the priority, we hasten to present the choice we have made to God in prayer, asking him to receive it and confirm it, possibly by signs. So that we might hear God's response, we employ the traditional rules of spiritual discernment (see the chapter on spiritual formation), not forgetting to take into account our feelings—for God can also speak to us through them.

d) Presenting our project to our authorities and obeying their decision

325. At the end of our discernment, we present the fruit of our apostolic discernment to the competent authorities, accepting the decisions and direction of apostolic work given to us in a spirit of faith and the desire to cooperate. The way in which we cooperate with authorities has been presented in the chapter on the vows.

3. Following a path of community apostolic discernment

326. §1. Because we share many common missions and because the apostolate is an essential area of cooperation in the Church, our apostolic discernment is often undertaken as a community. The pedagogy for developing discernment with others was presented in the chapter on community formation.

§2. When it is a question of determining in conventual chapter the apostolic orientations of the priory:

We take the time to help enlighten each other in our analysis of the situation, aware that discernment in common is a slow and laborious process, but that it enriches our perception of the situation and gives greater scope to the inspirations of the Spirit.

Together, we weigh up the pros and cons of the proposals, being mindful not to defend an opinion or one of the options, but to allow time to listen to each other and to welcome any dissensus as a path towards a more authentic consensus.

We seek to integrate our point of view with that of the community, with humility and personal detachment, preferring the common good to our own ideas.

After discerning together, we accept in obedience the communal decision taken by the chapter and validated by the legitimate authorities.

§3. Apostolic discernment in common is not only carried out in community. When practiced in a parish or in groups, it is a great way of integrating all the people involved in the mission. Practically speaking, it follows a path similar to the apostolic discernment of the conventual chapter.

4. Taking sufficient time

327. §1. Apostolic discernment not only considers the type of activity to be undertaken, but also the appropriate timing and rhythm of the work. Our apostolic life does not simply involve responding to emergencies; we want to develop long-term projects, which requires perseverance, moderation, and patience.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Give himself time to discern, while knowing how to act quickly when necessary.
- Learn to cooperate with others, even if this requires more time.
- Give priority to actions that generate momentum over the long-term, without obsessing about immediate results, accepting that it is others who will bring the work to completion.
- Patiently bear with difficulties and adverse situations or forced changes to a plan as a result of the dynamics of reality.

5. Evaluating our experiences and listening to the Spirit

328. §1. At the end of the process of discernment, and once we have seen the fruits of what has been decided, we make a habit of reviewing the events together. Our apostolic formation should help us to discern the presence of God in what has taken place, to evaluate the process as a whole, and the involvement of each individual person. This review process allows us to remain attentive to the Spirit.

§2. To go further in this aspect, we recommend that each brother:

- Ask how his apostolic activity has contributed to the Church's work of evangelisation.
- Consider whether he has taken account of the different contexts involved: the religious context, the sociological, cultural, and economic conditions.[177]
- Check whether all the important elements were observed (objectives, means, methods, tools, activities, cooperation, work and positioning of each person), using an evaluation chart drawn up by the brother himself or by the conventual chapter.

§3. For certain community apostolates, it is a good idea for the community to review what has taken place with a professional.

V. RECHARGING ONE'S BATTERIES

6. Taking time out for renewal

329. §1. Apostolic formation involves learning to alternate between work and rest, intense activity and prayer, apostolic activity and formation. We must take care not to exhaust ourselves in apostolic service, but to rest and recharge our batteries, through times of pause, reflection, prayer, and formation.

§2. Out of a concern to provide the best possible accompaniment for the people and communities to whom we are sent, we commit ourselves to ongoing formation and to bringing our formation up to date whenever necessary.

§3. In addition to what has been said in chapters 7 and 8 about physical rest and spiritual renewal, brothers should seek out ways of being refreshed in their apostolic work: spiritual reading, renewal in pastoral formation, experiencing what is being done in other ecclesial contexts, reading the latest books, etc.

7. Finding support in supervision

330. §1. We need to regularly take a step back and review our apostolic activities, our involvement in them, and their impact on us. Receiving supervision enables a brother to become more aware of his own strengths, the areas in which he is fruitful, and new opportunities for growth that are opening up to him. Being accompanied through supervision helps a brother gain a clearer vision of what took place over the course of his apostolate.

§2. Certain aptitudes contribute to a brother's successful supervision:

- Learning to pay attention to what is going on inside himself and to the emotions he is experiencing.
- Putting into words an event or a feeling, and the ability to specify significant details.
- An ability to distance himself from what he has experienced in order to learn from it.
- Focusing more on identifying problems than on trying to solve them.

§3. In order to be able to embrace the supervision he receives, a brother should, in all humility, take a step back interiorly from what is being said, so that he does not view supervision as a calling into question of what was accomplished, but rather as a means of coming to a serene understanding of events and his experience of them.

177. *Cf.* Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, *Directory for Catechesis*, n. 279-280.

PART THREE

Stages and Progression of Formation

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE

1. Formation considered as a journey

331. §1. This section presents formation as a journey marked by stages of growth, rest, and trial. Whilst the journey is unique for each brother, there are nevertheless characteristic stages and circumstances that can be delineated.

§2. Every Institute is responsible for developing "a formation programme inspired by their particular charism, presenting clearly and in all its stages the course to be followed in order to assimilate fully the spirituality of the respective Institute" (VC 68). This formation programme has two objectives:

- "It explains to consecrated persons how to live that spirit in the different stages of life on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ"—this is the path of ongoing formation (Ch. 13).
- "It shows how to pass on the Institute's spirit so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations, in different cultures and geographical regions"—this is the programme of initial formation (Chs 14-17).

§3. The key moments presented in chapter 13 are not unrelated to initial formation, so a young brother will benefit greatly from reading them.

2. Presentation of the plan

332. §1. Chapter 13 aims to give brothers the tools they need to grow at different key moments in their formation journey. It presupposes everything that was set out in Part Two on the six dimensions of formation.

§2. Chapters 14-17 are also based on the previous developments concerning ongoing formation. They aim to define the stages of growth so that brothers in initial formation will be able to mark out their growth over time in each of the six dimensions of formation. Each chapter therefore outlines the various stages of initial formation, presenting what is specific to each stage (objectives, means, accompaniment, etc.) and how it fits into the brothers' journey of ongoing growth.

3. Prescriptive value

333. §1. The section on ongoing formation offers advice on how to negotiate a particular moment in a brother's journey of growth and is not prescriptive.

§2. The section which presents the different stages of initial formation is binding. The different chapters define, as a norm, the objectives of each stage of initial formation as well as the means that must be implemented by the brothers in formation and the formators to obtain those objectives.

SECTION ONE

Key Moments in Ongoing Formation

Chapter 13
SOME OF THE KEY MOMENTS IN ONGOING FORMATION

334. §1. Our ongoing formation goes through many phases, each with its own particularities and challenges. Common to all these moments of growth, however, is the experience of a certain loss and the need for an act of abandonment, so that we can move towards a greater gift of self. The journey of growth we undertake is therefore a Paschal journey, a journey of life and resurrection, which progressively configures us to the mystery of Christ, until the moment when we will be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

§2. The key moments presented in this chapter do not represent a paradigmatic journey, as if there were a single path that every brother takes with clearly anticipated stages. Rather, this chapter provides guidelines for approaching the key moments in our journey of ongoing formation and furnishes us with the means of growth to meet the accompanying challenges, means that are advisory rather than prescriptive.

I. NEW BEGINNINGS AND PERIODS OF TRANSITION

335. §1. Periods of discovery and transition can be challenging moments that require attentive accompaniment commensurate with the situation and personality of the brother. This accompaniment is the responsibility of the entire local community, but the prior has a central role to play.

§2. The prior will take into account the fact that assimilating a new context takes time and that a brother going through a period of transition needs a certain amount of room to manoeuvre in order to properly engage in new experiences. Particular attention will be paid to giving brothers free time when they have to learn a new language or discover a culture that is very different from their own.

§3. The community must ensure they do not overload a newly arrived brother to the detriment of his health or the success of his initiation into a new environment. For his part, the newly assigned brother will willingly ask the brothers of the priory for help in finding support for his accompaniment and formation.

1. New beginnings

a) A brother's first assignment

336. §1. This stage should enable brothers assigned for the first time after the end of their initial formation to "live to the full the freshness of their love and enthusiasm for Christ" (VC 70) as they enter into the realities of life in an apostolic priory. The challenge is to negotiate the transition from the house of formation to life in a priory, from taking classes to putting them into practice, from a very structured life to managing a state of full responsibility.

§2. It is the responsibility of the prior to pay special attention to the needs of the newly assigned brother. Together with the conventual chapter, he will ensure that the conditions are right for

welcoming the brother. Whatever form of accompaniment is put in place, the differing circumstances will be taken into account: while some brothers will not have had the chance to lead an autonomous life before entering the Community, others will have already had considerable experience of it.

§3. When appropriate and when conditions permit, temporary mentorship by one of the brothers of the priory will be arranged. As far as possible, the prior will involve the young brother in the choice of his mentor. The role of the mentor will be defined in each instance according to the needs and desires of the mentee, but will above all involve fraternal support and advice, and will not imply any relationship of authority. It should enable the brother receiving mentorship to become more autonomous and responsible. It aims above all to help him integrate the new elements of life as a fully-fledged perpetually professed brother, the information necessary for his mission, and the local context of the priory. The mentor may invite the young brother to take part in some of his apostolic activities and in turn offer to attend those of the newly assigned brother.

§4. Several areas require particular attention during the first years of assignment and represent a challenge for the newly assigned brother: a healthy use of digital technology (means of communication, internet, social networks); responsibility in his use of goods and money; taking responsibility within the conventual chapter; a new way of practicing obedience as he discovers greater flexibility in his use of time; balanced apostolic engagement (neither too much nor too little); and the daily unification of the different dimensions of his life (prayer, study, apostolate, fraternal service).

§5. The community that welcomes a brother on his first assignment must help give him the necessary confidence to undertake the tasks he has been asked to carry out. While the conventual chapter will encourage him to be bold and put his qualities to good use, it will avoid entrusting him with burdens that are too heavy to bear.

b) A brother's first steps in priestly ministry

337. §1. Receiving the priesthood within the consecrated life is a grace both for the priest and for the Church, for profession of the evangelical counsels lived out in the common life and according to the charism of the community brings a particular fruitfulness to priestly ministry. The ongoing formation of perpetually professed priests should aim to ensure that their call to the priesthood and their vocation to the consecrated life "converge in a profound and dynamic unity" (VC 30) and that their priestly ministry is harmoniously integrated into fraternal and conventual life.

§2. When a brother starts out in the ministry of the priesthood, he is introduced to many new situations with which he must become familiar and which he must progressively integrate. Every young priest will therefore seek to:

- Make the liturgy the matrix of his ministry and lead the people entrusted to him in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Integrate discretion and sacramental secrecy into his life, for these lead to a new form of solitude in the life of the priest and must not be transformed into isolation or self-referentiality
- Grow in the maturity of his pastoral and sacramental discernment, which cannot be acquired as theory but develop through a guided review of concrete experience.
- Enter into obedience to the bishop by integrating the customs and pastoral directives of the diocese where he is assigned and by collaborating with the diocesan authorities, other priests, and pastoral figures.
- Discover priestly fraternity and fraternity within the presbyterate.
- Maintain simple relations with non-clerical brothers, without thinking himself superior, in a spirit of brotherhood and service.

§3. The role of the prior and the conventual chapter is "to set up a system of personal accompaniment of young priests, to promote and maintain the quality of their ministry, so that they can embrace their first pastoral challenges with enthusiasm" (RFIS 83). Young priests are encouraged to choose, in conjunction with the prior, an older brother priest who can act as a mentor and companion as they learn their "craft" and discover the cultural and ecclesial context in which they exercise their ministry.[178] It is important for all young priests to get into the habit of "asking the advice of priests with more experience" (RFIS 83) and to give themselves the space they need to reflect on their experiences and receive support, both in the pastoral field and on a spiritual and human level. They must also get into the habit of receiving supervision.

§4. The conventual chapter will be mindful to foster confidence in the young priest and to encourage his zeal, while gradually increasing the responsibilities entrusted to him. The learning process involved at the beginning of a brother's priestly ministry requires him to integrate lots of new information into his life and discernment, and so the prior and the community will encourage him to take the time necessary for assimilation and review. The brother must play his part in discerning the weight of responsibility that he can bear, based on a healthy understanding of the gift-of-self and sound self-knowledge.

§5. The Community will ensure that further formation is given to young priests who have been ordained for fewer than five years, according to a plan drawn up by the Director of Formation. The province is responsible for organising sessions for young priests. There should be no hesitation in making use of formation courses organised by dioceses or other communities.

c) A brother's first steps in diaconal ministry

338. §1. In the same way that newly ordained priests are accompanied in their first steps of ministry, conventual chapters and priors will ensure support is given to newly ordained deacons in their priory as they undertake their first experiences of ministry. What has been said about the accompaniment of newly ordained priests extends analogously to deacon brothers according to their own particular circumstances.

§2. The formation of deacons should enable them to seek to deepen their understanding of the meaning of the diaconal ministry and to experience its beauty; root the diaconate in their religious life and integrate it into the offering of their whole person to God; and work to integrate the diaconate successfully into the priory community and the Church.

§3. Young deacons must learn to become ministers of the Church. Every newly ordained deacon will therefore make a special effort to:

- Give thanks for the beauty of his ministry and deepen his diaconal spirituality by making use of readings, teachings, and sermons on the spirit of the diaconate.
- Deepen the quality of his service to the word of God by regularly reading Scripture in lectio divina, and by carefully preparing his sermons.
- Go further in his service and welcome of the poor, which is a characteristic dimension of his ministry, by walking with them and showing them the love of charity on behalf of the Church, and by interceding for them, particularly in the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Take his place in the college of deacons at both a diocesan level and in the Congregation, where he will find encouragement in his ministry, fraternal support, a communion of spirit and prayer, and the possibility to share experience and advice.

178. When the first years of assignment overlap with the first years of priestly ministry, the senior priest will act as mentor, to avoid multiple accompaniments.

2. Periods of transition

339. §1. Arriving at a new priory, integrating into a new community, and starting a new role or mission can be challenging moments of transition. In most cases, moving into new circumstances presupposes the end of a previous mission or assignment. Leaving a priory is not always difficult, but it can sometimes entail—depending on the situation and the personality of the brother—an experience of grief, which can in turn be purifying. Every change entails a certain calling and can become an eminent moment of formation.

§2. It will be opportune both for himself and for others if a brother prepares his departure as well as possible by giving himself the time to say goodbye to the people with whom he was linked in the apostolate, to listen to their feedback, and to prepare the handover. To ensure a smooth transition, the brother should try his best to close any files that need closing and to pass on his responsibility as best he can to the person who will succeed him, in a spirit of service.

§3. During a change of assignment, the accompaniment provided by the priories of departure and arrival have a great influence on the experience of transition.

II. PERIODS OF INTENSIVE FORMATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

340. In addition to initial formation,[179] brothers may undertake periods of formation or training which are of great importance for personal, religious, and ecclesial growth. The desire to learn and a concern for being sufficiently skilled help us all to maintain a spirit of interior openness and receptivity, which is a fundamental attitude for ongoing formation.

1. Formation for an apostolic or community mission

341. §1. It is imperative that every brother who has received a mission undergoes the appropriate training to be able to assume his responsibility. It is down to the brother to discern, with the relevant authorities, the appropriate course of formation. The Community (superiors, conventual chapter) will, for its part, encourage this training and provide the brother with the effective means of undertaking it.

§2. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that "the urgent need for appropriate and necessary training" does not "turn into a frantic quest for efficiency, as if apostolic service depended primarily on human means rather than on God" (VC 38).

2. Postgraduate studies and consecrated life

342. §1. University studies have much to offer a brother's formation. They encourage research, rigour, coming up against different points of view, deeper understanding, cooperation in study, and interdisciplinarity. They allow for a creative and missionary openness to our contemporaries who think, research, and write.

§2. Initial shared discernment between the brother and the Congregation makes it possible to evaluate the appropriateness of a university course in light of the objectives pursued (qualification with a view to mission, formation to become a formator or to take up a post in the Congregation, personal development, etc.), as well as the brother's ability to integrate the rhythm of university studies into his religious life.

179. See chapters 5-6 and 14-17.

§3. In addition to the strictly intellectual dimension, university studies have a significant human, spiritual, and religious impact on a brother. Studying—especially at doctoral level—brings with it an isolation that is sometimes difficult to bear. Student brothers must therefore make use of tailored accompaniment. Whether they are in a priory or dispensed from priory residence, student brothers will be able to rely on their superior to help them discern how to balance their rhythm of study with the demands of religious life and fraternity. They will choose a brother to act as a tutor, whose role will be to accompany them in the progress of their academic work and help them to persevere in study. Each year, the Director Provincial of Formation will review the student brother's situation with both him and his tutor.

§4. The brothers of the priory must understand that undertaking a doctorate is a service to the community as a whole and to the Church, and not solely for the good of the brother. They will show their fraternal support by paying an interest in how his research is progressing and by being understanding when he is absent from certain community activities. The prior will nevertheless help the doctoral student brother maintain regular fraternal activity and adhere to an agreed upon discipline of life so that he can both pursue his religious life and complete his research.

3. Acquiring personal skills and proficiency

343. When a brother expresses the desire to undertake formation (in a craft, art, technical or scientific field, etc.), we will discern with him whether the endeavour is appropriate and the conditions right, with a view to his personal good and the good of the community. The acquisition of a skill helps us to be more qualitatively present to others, contributes to the Community, and enriches apostolic life; it contributes to re-adjustment in our interior life and encourages personal growth.

III. TIMES OF FULFILMENT AND JOYFUL FAITHFULNESS

1. Humble daily faithfulness

344. §1. Daily repetition is a fundamental component of our faithfulness. The regularity of our life enables us to establish a healthy routine that carries us forward day by day. We exercise our freedom every time we participate in the personal and community activities of our life. By taking a multitude of small steps in the mundane routine of everyday life, we strengthen and deepen our bond with Christ. This humble faithfulness is the sober expression of fervour tested over time.

§2. Through this daily faithfulness, which is the work of the Spirit, we can develop the fruits of which Saint Paul speaks: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23). These fruits allow us to recognise the Spirit's (often discreet) presence in our lives.

2. The joyful experience of spiritual fruitfulness

345. §1. Like the Virgin Mary, who in the Visitation discovered that through her charitable gift of self she was an instrument of the gift of the Holy Spirit for Elizabeth, we too sometimes experience the joy of being an instrument of God's action, which both exceeds us and is brought about through our cooperation. The experience of this fruitfulness, which exceeds our own capacities, is a source of incomparable joy that arouses our wonder and thanksgiving. Our task is simply to give God the glory for this fruitfulness and to seek to remain humbly open to his action.

§2. By taking time to celebrate God's blessings, we pause to enjoy them and remember them in our hearts. In this way, each of us gradually weaves together the story of God's wonders in our lives. We draw from this memorial the hope that will be our strength to remain faithful in times of joy as well as in times of trial.

3. Jubilee celebrations

346. Celebrating anniversaries of profession or ordination allows us, in joy and festivity, to remember God's daily faithfulness to us, who in turn has given us the gift of remaining faithful to him through our humble perseverance. These moments of thanksgiving build up our fraternal communion and help sustain us in our faithfulness. By celebrating God's constant presence at the heart of our lives, we renew our desire to belong to him.

IV. PERIODS OF PAUSE AND REST

1. Sunday rest

347. §1. In keeping with the rhythm of creation, the Sabbath commandment, and the celebration of the mystery of salvation, our weeks must be marked by times of pause and rest. Every brother must find an appropriate way to sanctify the Lord's Day and to undertake rest on Sunday in accordance with his pastoral responsibilities (*cf.* CCC 2184-2188). For us—as for all Christians—emphasising this rest enables us to celebrate the Paschal Mystery of Christ, experience the community life of the Church, protest against the logic of efficiency and productivity of the modern world, and help serve creation.

§2. When apostolic work on Sunday does not allow for rest, it is all the more important to respect the weekly time of desert (*cf.* CCC 2187).

2. Times of desert

348. §1. The weekly time of desert should provide each brother with some free time and a sense of gratuity within his week, in order to find rest for body and soul in a personal way outside his conventual and apostolic tasks. The opening up of a regular time free from activity, in which brothers take a step back from the demands of daily life, is necessary to allow the development of a human and spiritual interiority—itself indispensable to our integral growth in maturity. The time of desert offers each brother a favourable setting in which to take his bearings, let the experiences of the past week resurface in his conscience, and make himself available to listen to God and to his own heart.

§2. To integrate times of desert into the rhythm of his life, we recommend that each brother:

- Maintain a time of desert in his personal weekly schedule, and foster awareness in himself and in the faithful that he needs time away from his ordinary duties.
- Include some time spent in contact with nature or doing manual work as an aid to solitude.
- Take some time for leisure by participating in an activity that replenishes him on a physical, mental, and cultural level.

- Maintain times of inactivity and of transition between activities in his day, to give himself the time he needs to listen to God and to his own heart.
- Seek to enter into solitary prayer, adoration, and contemplation of Jesus, so that he might renew his bond with Jesus and draw from the wellsprings of prayer his apostolic fruitfulness.
- Prioritise the word of God and other spiritual nourishment as a means of personal renewal, following the example of the Virgin Mary and in line with the spirituality of the desert.

§3. The community plays an important role in this regard by ensuring that the number of demands placed on the brother and urgent jobs requested of him are not so numerous that they lead him to have to forgo times of desert.

§4. In addition to times of rest or holiday, we take an annual—or at another rhythm depending on the individual—prolonged time of desert, with a view to deepening our contemplative life. The spiritual objectives of this time may vary (free time for prayer, inner healing, reconciliation with oneself, time to reconnect with the word of God, broader and deeper personal spiritual accompaniment, etc.). It is useful to plan this time in prayer and to discuss the details with our spiritual accompanier before taking it to the relevant authorities for consideration.

3. Annual time of retreat

349. Annual retreats are a normal part of our lives. They offer us the opportunity for regular respite and allow us to recharge our batteries, review our experiences, discern, and readjust. It is a time to take stock of our lives under God's watchful eye, without neglecting the opportunity for rest and physical activity.

4. Times of "consolidation"

350. §1. The General Chapter of 2022 authorised the Prior General to experiment with the introduction of a "'time of consolidation' for the brothers, ten to fifteen years after the end of their initial formation."[180] This should enable the relevant brothers to "review their first years of assignment in the light of the Gospel and our specific vocation, in order to consolidate what they have learned and foster new vigour in their life and mission".[181] The time of consolidation will take the form of a three to six-month programme, including periods organised by the Congregation (at least one month) and periods left to the organisation of each individual brother (at least two months).

§2. The period organised by the Community should enable the brother to renew his bonds within the community and to take his bearings, while refining his view of the contemporary world and the apostolic field. It will include communal activities, meetings, moments of sharing, and formation. We therefore recommend:

- A time of retreat as well as times of inactivity and silence, so that he might enter again into the presence of God and be present to himself.
- Times of shared reflection on human, religious, spiritual, and apostolic experience.
- Reflection on the conditions of consecrated life in the contemporary world and in the Congregation's present circumstances.
- Reflection on the charism as it is lived out today and on where God is calling the Community.
- Time to reread the Constitutions and important Community texts.

180. *Actes 2022*, "Votes on formation".
181. *Idem.*

- Receiving teaching to bring himself up to date on intellectual and apostolic questions.
- A full health check-up.
- The opportunity to meet with a psychologist or therapist.
- The possibility of carrying out an assessment of his skills and abilities so that he might better invest himself in apostolic life.

In order to ensure that this period of consolidation is rooted in experience, we favour the use of testimony, sharing in small-groups, role-playing, group exercises, and review, as well as anything that allows personal experience to be taken into account. Coaches, doctors and all kinds of experts can be brought in to provide valuable input.

§3. The two months that are free to him should allow the brother to put in place the means that will help him to deepen his vocation and enable personal renewal: pilgrimages, personal time of desert or in a hermitage, special retreat, time in a monastery, fraternal time, family time, specific formation, treatment, therapy, etc. The programme will be discussed with and approved by the Prior Provincial, taking into account the needs of the priory to which the brother is assigned.

§4. By dedicating resources to the organisation of this time of consolidation (time, energy, finances), the Congregation, the province, and the priory show their commitment to giving the brothers concerned the means to take care of and tend to themselves and their vocation. In dialogue with the Prior Provincial, each priory will look for ways to adapt in order to free the brother who is taking part in this time of consolidation. Implementing this project will require flexibility and anticipation on the part of the local community, which will in turn reap the benefits over time.

5. Sabbaticals

351. §1. When a brother asks for a sabbatical, it may be for any number of reasons: to spend time in desert (*cf.* Dir. 124.1), spiritual renewal, rest, formation, healing, discernment in the midst of a crisis, etc. The "sabbatical" corresponds to the brothers' need to have time for integration, to ripen a decision, to learn, to go through a transition.

§2. Whatever the objectives, these must be clarified and set down in writing before the start of the period in question. A sabbatical can become a trial when it is neither prepared nor accompanied. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that the brother is always accompanied during this personal stage. The community will also undertake to be present to the brother during this period.

§3 A sabbatical can be spent in a hermitage, a monastery, a house of formation, an apostolic convent of the Community, or in another place agreed with the superior.

V. TIMES OF MORE INTENSE SPIRITUAL COMBAT

1. Loss of zeal

a) The danger of routine

352. §1. As the years pass by the feeling of routine can set in, giving us the impression that we are merely functionaries of the Church or of the sacred: we carry out the tasks that are asked of us, but without the zeal that animated us when we first set out. We then risk simply playing a role and allowing a dichotomy to develop between our interior and exterior worlds.

§2. A brother who experiences this is called to focus on what is essential by rediscovering "one's first love, the inspiring spark which first gave rise to the following" (SAFC 22); indeed, "only one whose gaze is fixed on what is truly essential can renew his 'yes' to the gift received and, in life's various seasons, does not cease to make a gift of himself; only one who lets himself be conformed to the Good Shepherd finds unity, peace and strength in the obedience of service…".[182]

§3. Taking time out (retreat, desert, pilgrimage, formation course) and receiving proper accompaniment (spiritual, medical, psychological, etc.) are the best ways to get back on track and redirect a brother's energies toward the gift of self.

b) The temptation to seek consolation away from Christ

353. §1. At any moment in our lives, we can feel the temptation to seek consolation away from Christ (in relationships, projects, activities, hobbies, etc.). The temptation can be particularly powerful when we are experiencing moments of vulnerability, failure, or idleness. This difficulty can become critical when the situation becomes the norm and something structural.

§2. A brother who experiences this temptation is called to rediscover the meaning of his religious consecration through his vows. This means tasting anew the profound joy that comes from obedience to the God of life, the disowning of ourselves in order to welcome the unique richness that is Christ, and an undivided love for the One who loved us first. A practical guide for working to deepen our vows is given in chapter 10.

c) The risk of acedia

354. §1. Throughout our lives, the risk of acedia—loss of taste for the spiritual life, which translates into mediocrity and a slackening of the consecrated life—recurs repeatedly and in different forms.

§2. When facing this situation, a brother should try to identify the measures that might help him:

- Strengthen simple, joyful fraternal ties and rely on brothers with whom he is close.
- Deepen his self-knowledge in the light of God and his brothers.
- Choose one or more means of spiritual renewal (pilgrimage, retreat, spiritual reading, etc.).
- Take stock of his skills and capacities and reorient his mission in order to rediscover his apostolic motivation.
- Reconnect with the practice of lectio divina and study to regain his intellectual zeal.
- Undertake formation in order to re-mobilise his energies.
- Draw on the testimonies of older brothers who have already been through these trials.

§3. When a brother is going through this, his prior and spiritual accompanier must, in a spirit of goodwill, take into account the more intimate trials which can be attached to these moments of slackening (mid-life crises or crises of another nature, etc.). In some cases, the help of a psychologist, doctor, or therapist could prove invaluable.

d) Disappointment and disillusionment in mid-life

355. §1. In mid-life there can often be a period of questioning, during which each of us experiences his personal weakness, discovers "conflicts that may remain in his personality […] and [which] need

182. Pope Francis, *Letter to the participants of the extraordinary general assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference* (8 November 2014), quoted in RFIS 84; *cf.* PO 14.

to be addressed" (RFIS 84), experiences frustration at the meagre results in his personal growth or in his apostolate, and experiences disillusionment faced with the ideals he set for himself and which he has not achieved.

§2. This period is marked by a loss of confidence in the points of reference that have hitherto been accepted with serenity. It can lead to a feeling of failure and a questioning of one's vocation. Grieving over our illusions is a vital process, necessary for our human and spiritual growth. It is the essential stage in the transition from an ideal to acceptance of oneself and of others; it is a question of not confusing "the completeness of [our] dedication with the degree of good results" (VC 70). When it is lived well, this period allows us to refine our self-knowledge in the light of God, to deepen our hope, and to put down new roots in our vocational choice. Instead of leading to self-centred disappointment, the experience of failure "can lead [...] to a greater humility and trust in the merciful action of the Lord – whose “strength is shown most fully in weakness” (*cf.* 2Cor 12:9)" (RFIS 84).

§3. To get through this stage, it is recommended that a brother tries to re-evaluate his objectives in life, drawing on the benevolent gaze of his brothers and carrying out spiritual discernment with the help of his accompanier. The brother experiencing this could benefit from consulting the proposed means of growth in the chapters on human and spiritual formation.

§4. Grieving in this period is a long-term process and will require patience. The Prior Provincial and the local prior will give the brother concerned the means and the time needed to get through this period of transition, from which he is the primary one to suffer.

2. Crises

a) Facing a crisis

356. §1. Crises can occur at any age. They can be caused by a broad variety of factors: a change of assignment, mission, or ministry; difficulties in one’s work or apostolic setbacks; being overworked; misunderstandings; feelings of marginalisation; problems of governance in the Congregation, province, or priory; physical or psychological illness; spiritual aridity; bereavement; problems with interpersonal relationships; strong temptations; feelings of uselessness; crises of faith or identity; emotional crises; etc. Whatever their nature, crises involve an element of risk, but if we allow God to act, they can become a step towards our Passover (*cf.* Jn 16:21; 2 Tim 2:12). They are part of our spiritual growth and struggle.

§2. A crisis brings into play positions where the human and the spiritual intersect. We have to accept God's way of leading us, which means surrendering and letting go; we have to accept to talk about our difficulties and to ask for help so that we might get to the heart of the problem. This requires that we discern between the source and the effects of our difficulties; to differentiate between our feelings and reality. One needs courage to do this. It sometimes seems easier to remain in denial about our suffering, our mistakes, our weaknesses, our limitations, and our rebellions. When all this is faced up to, the crisis can become a moment of "radical conversion," a stripping away of self to follow the path of the crucified and risen Christ. By relying on the covenant God made with us on His own initiative, a covenant He does not intend to revoke, a brother experiencing trial gives spiritual meaning to the purification and stripping away that he is experiencing (*cf.* Rev 2:10; James 1:12).

§3. The experience of crisis helps us grow in maturity and teaches us a certain wisdom in the face of life's trials, for “someone who has never had his trials knows little” (Sir 34:10, JB). By enabling us to learn from our mistakes, ongoing formation encourages us to value certain means that can play an essential role in times of trial:

- Every brother should cultivate opportunities to talk: regular spiritual accompaniment, solid friendships that allow him to confide in others, building up of fraternal relations within his

priory, acquaintance with a psychologist or health professionals with whom he has already spoken and who can advise him if necessary.

- Similarly, spiritual discernment, through which we learn to recognise God's work in our lives, is an essential resource in times of crisis; a brother in difficulty will be relieved if he can draw on tried and tested knowledge of the procedures and conditions of spiritual discernment.
- Finally, the journey of the saints can inspire us and give us an example of how each of us—in our own unique way—can face up to trials in faith.

b) Accompaniment through crises

357. §1. Through its intersession and fraternity, the community plays a vital role in accompanying a brother in crisis. Fraternal relations make it possible to create a space for expressing and listening to feelings, or to maintain a discreet and warm silence. Kindness, respect, and compassion can not only help the brother, but sometimes hasten the resolution of problems. Particular attention should be paid to brothers in crisis who do not live in community. Sometimes the absence of community life leads to isolation and accentuates the desire for separation; fraternal initiatives and prayerful support across the distance can be crucial here.

§2. It is always beneficial for the community's first reaction to a brother in difficulty to be one of acceptance and serenity. The Community must accept that the brother will need time to get through his crisis and be understanding of his need. A period of crisis is not only a time of trial; it is also a time of discernment and growth in maturity. Most of the time, it is a miscalculation not to give a brother the time he needs to face up to the complex situations he is going through. Frameworks are certainly necessary, but they will need to be regularly adjusted with kindness and flexibility.

§3. It is appropriate for the superior to be attentive to the reactions of the other members of the priory to the personal crisis of a brother, for when one member of the body suffers, the other members suffer with him. Accompanying a brother in crisis requires patience and a certain amount of endurance on the part of the brothers who live with him. Conversely, the inability to accept or accompany a brother's crisis can reveal immaturity in the community, which needs to be questioned.

§4. Fraternal accompaniment serves as the basis for accompaniment provided by the prior and the Prior Provincial. Their closeness and benevolence are essential. In the event of a crisis, cooperation with the brother is essential because the superior does not know *a priori* what is good for the brother. The prior should remember that listening is not the same as looking for solutions and does not necessarily lead to advice. The prior will be of great help to the brother in crisis if he helps him to name, identify, and situate his difficulties.

§5. It will often be appropriate, when the crisis places the brother in danger, to encourage him to move away from his place of trial so that he can take the distance necessary for discernment and accompanied work on himself. However, care must be taken not to simply displace or delay the problem. It is not up to the Community to provide all the solutions, but it is good for them to encourage the brother to be responsible for himself and propose suitable ways forward.

3. The trial of illness

358. §1. The trial of illness is undoubtedly a powerful moment in our lives. Lived in faith, it configures us to the passion of Christ, in the hope of his resurrection, and opens us to new fruitfulness for the good of God's people. With God's help and the workings of his grace, health related trials can become a way for each of us to discover his tenderness and presence.

§2. The diagnosis of an illness is often a brutal shock for those to whom it is given—it can turn their lives and their outlook upside down. While for some it may only be a temporary ordeal, for

others it can have far-reaching consequences, forcing them to rethink their entire way of life. When they discover they are ill, the illness can be seen as a hindrance to daily life and give rise to a feeling of bereavement. The brother who is ill then goes through the different stages of grief: shock and denial; pain and guilt; anger; bargaining; depression and pain; rebuilding; acceptance. This journey of acceptance is lived in union with the cross of Christ and with the support of his brothers.

§3. The community plays an essential role in accompanying a brother who is ill. Prayer, fraternal presence, and gentleness are essential ways of supporting him. Each member of the community will be mindful to adjust the way he is present to the needs of the brother who is suffering. This requires attentive listening, availability, and a great capacity for adaptation. Care must be taken to maintain discretion towards the brother, respecting his privacy and avoiding talking about his illness without his agreement, both outside and within the community.

§4. Psychological illness (bipolarity, chronic depression, etc.) is a particular trial that requires a different kind of assistance from the community. Because this type of illness is not always visible, it requires a certain amount of vigilance. It requires a precise understanding of the brother's illness in order to accompany him appropriately; in this area, we should not hesitate to seek advice from professionals. At the same time, the brothers will be mindful not to reduce the brother to his illness, but to welcome him as a person who is wounded and in need of support and help; in their benevolence they will develop discretion outside the priory, respecting the brother's privacy, without denying the problem.

§5. The sacrament of the sick is a vital resource for coping with illness. Whenever possible, it is beneficial to celebrate the sacrament in the presence of the community. We then offer the sick brother a witness to Christ who stoops down over his suffering humanity. Receiving the sacrament of the sick is a support to the brother and helps him to make sense of his suffering.

§6. Once his health has healed, the community must understand that the brother who has been ill will have changed: his perception of life will have evolved, which will often lead to changes in the way he lives.

4. Times when the community is tested by a brother

359. §1. It can happen that the behaviour of a brother undermines the harmony in a priory and makes common life difficult by exceeding the threshold of what the local community is capable of bearing. The situation becomes critical when the brother's attitude habitually undermines normal sharing in chapter, healthy relationships between brothers, apostolic mission, and the reputation of the priory. The main sign of this is a brother’s enduring inability to question his own actions, to listen to corrections, or to integrate them. When this occurs, the brother in question requires more attentive help.

§2. However, not every priory is in a position to deal with this kind of difficult situation. The passive or active resistance of an obstinate brother sometimes tires the community to the point of exhaustion. The Prior Provincial will be mindful not to lose hope that the brother will be able to change and will take appropriate steps that are adapted to the resources available to the province. While it is important to help the brother in difficulty, the other brothers must also be safeguarded.

§3. When accompanying a brother over time becomes too challenging for a single person, then working with more than one person can prove useful. Indeed, a team accompanies difficult cases more wisely; it enables a shared vision to be put in place and resources to be pooled. An accompaniment team will always be led by the person who has authority over the brother in question and will include one or more other members—these may be lay people, including, if needed, a doctor, psychologist, or behavioural professional.

§4. Faced with this scenario, we must all remember the power of the prayer of brothers who come together before God. Even when obstacles to fraternal communion in the common life remain, it still belongs to us to maintain hope for our brothers and to support them in prayer.

VI. OLD AGE: A TIME TO LET GO

1. An alternative way of supporting the mission and the community

360. §1. When an older brother's strength declines, he is gradually forced to adapt and reduce his activity. This period of renunciation triggers a grieving process that is both demanding and humanly costly. A brother needs to be helped to live out this stage, not as a withdrawal from the mission to evangelise, but as an alternative, no less fruitful way of carrying out that mission. He can now play his part in the apostolic outreach of the community in different ways: "One way, and a very important one, is supporting the common mission with prayer and sacrifice. Another way is through small services that can be offered depending on the person's health, and also being witnesses to and promotors of gratuitous service" (IMB 36).

§2. In fraternal life, the older brothers have an invaluable role to play for their younger brothers by offering them the witness of a life that has weathered every kind of storm, carried forwards by the Lord's faithfulness. Their experience and wisdom are a precious resource, and they should make themselves available to listen, encourage, and give advice.

2. Becoming dependant on others

361. §1. With the arrival of old age comes new challenges as older brothers become more dependent on others. This stage involves a painful process of acceptance and of being stripped back. The gradual loss of autonomy and the onset of illness or infirmity are a fresh calling for a brother to let himself be shaped by the paschal experience, until he is configured to Christ crucified. The brother then "feels more profoundly within [himself] the experience which Paul described in the context of moving toward the resurrection: 'We are not discouraged; and even if, in us, the outward man is being corrupted, the inner man is being renewed day by day.' [1 Cor 4:15]" (PI 70).

§2. The community must take into account all the human and medical practicalities of care for their elderly members but must not limit care to this dimension alone. We must also make sure we provide elderly brothers with the spiritual support and nourishment they need as their condition evolves.

3. The final Passover

362. §1. Following the Lamb wherever he goes is fulfilled in the last stage of our life, at "the moment [...] for uniting oneself to the supreme hour of the Lord's Passion" (VC 70). We are called to participate in his act of self-offering on the Cross, the summit of love that fulfils his entire life as the Son. By giving his life, Christ opened up the possibility of living our death in him as a free gift of ourselves to the Father: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (Jn 10:18). In this ultimate letting go, which cannot be taken back, we live our final Passover in the hope of the beatific vision: "we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). The Father then brings to completion in us "the mysterious process of formation which began many years before" (VC 70, *cf.* PI 70).

§2. Community accompaniment plays an essential role in this final stage. The brothers of the priory will do everything they can to accompany their brother in his final moments, including when he is living in a care home. Every brother must be able to count on the support of his brothers during his final days, until the moment of his final Passover, accompanied, if possible, by the singing of the Salve Regina, or another Marian recommendation.

SECTION TWO

Stages of Initial Formation

Chapter 14
THE PERIOD OF PRE-NOVITIATE

363. **§1.** The formation of a Brother of Saint John begins with preparation for entry into the Institute: the period of pre-novitiate. This begins from the first steps of someone's vocational discernment with the Congregation and finishes at the end of postulancy, when the candidate applies for admission to the Congregation. It is divided into three phases, the duration of which varies according to the region: (I) the pastoral care of vocations; (II) observership; (III) postulancy.

§2. What follows outlines the general objectives and means of achieving those objectives for each of the three stages of pre-novitiate. The areas of focus in this period of discernment and accompaniment differ according to the culture of the candidate; it is for the Ratio Formationis Provincialis, after having examined the regional context and means available, to formulate a precise and adapted programme for each of these stages in accordance with the following general indications.

I. ACCOMPANYING VOCATIONS: THE PASTORAL CARE OF VOCATIONS

364. "The invitation of Jesus, 'Come and see' (Jn 1 :39), is the golden rule of pastoral work for promoting vocations, even today. Following the example of founders and foundresses, this work aims at presenting the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel. A primary responsibility of all consecrated men and women is therefore to propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit's action in the heart of those who are called" (VC 64).

1. Accompanying someone's first steps

365. **§1.** "It is the individual religious who holds the first responsibility for saying 'yes' to the call which has been received and for accepting all the consequences of this response; this is not primarily in the order of the intellect, but of the whole of life" (PI 29). The primary aim of the pastoral care of vocations is therefore to be of service to those who seek to discover where the Lord is calling them, while respecting the young person's state of life (*cf.* Dir. 30.1).

§2 To meet this particular requirement:

- We will be careful to ensure that pastoral work for vocations is carried out in the spirit of the Gospel, as we are invited to do by Saint John in his account of Jesus' calling of the first disciples (Jn 1, 35-50):
  - The importance of witnesses who help a person to hear the Lord's call (the figure of John the Baptist).
  - The personal dimension of a vocation, respecting the freedom of the individual on their journey ("What are you looking for?" addressed to Andrew and John).
  - The call to make a choice ("Follow me!" in Philip's case).
  - Truthful dialogue in order to respond (dialogue with Nathanael).

- Two harmful attitudes should be avoided:
    - The logic of recruitment, which, by not respecting the individual's development, can lead to discernment that is rushed.
    - Too much timidity or inaction, when the community is no longer concerned with the calling of potential candidates and closes itself off to this fecundity, like a married couple who do not want to have children.
- Every brother and every priory must be mindful that they too are responsible for the pastoral care of vocations. They will therefore engage in apostolic work with young people and provide hospitality and accompaniment for those who are journeying to discover their vocation.

2. The pastoral care of vocations in conjunction with the local Church

366. §1. The Church invites consecrated men and women to pay particular attention to the pastoral care of vocations, which, as a result of cultural diversity, our socio-cultural context, and often a lack of maturity in candidates, requires a greater investment of our energy today. We must be particularly aware that "the pastoral care of vocations is aimed at men from a variety of age groups. Today, given the growth in mature vocations among those with one or more work experiences behind them, there is a growing awareness of the need to give particular attention to this age group" (RFIS 14).

§2. To this end:

- The Prior Provincial, together with his council, will establish a structure within the province of brothers responsible for the pastoral care of vocations. These brothers will be chosen for their qualities in accompaniment and vocational discernment with young people, for their spirit of collaboration with the local Church, and for their constructive love of our vocation.
- These vocations promotors will develop activities (camps, discernment retreats, etc.) and the means of social communication to make the charism of the community known and to invite people to discover our life. They will help make brothers aware of the significance of their choice of apostolic work and their apostolic witness for vocations. When they accompany young people who are asking the question of their vocation, they will combine respect for the person's personal freedom with the ability to invite them to listen boldly to the Lord.
- The Ratio Formationis Provincialis will define how the structure of the promotion of vocations will be adapted to regional circumstances.

II. THE PERIOD OF OBSERVERSHIP (ASPIRANTS)

1. The objectives of this period

367. When a potential candidate expresses the explicit desire to get to know our life more closely, the Congregation will offer him, after a period of initial accompaniment, the possibility to move on to a stage of observation, where he will be known as an "observer," living near a convent while maintaining his life as a lay person (*cf.* D30. 1). This stage has a threefold objective: to help the candidate to grow humanly and as a Christian in the discernment of his vocation; to enable him to gain a better

understanding of religious life and the charism of our community; to verify the candidate's suitability to live a consecrated life with us.

a) Human and Christian growth

368. §1. There are several ways in which we can help an observer to grow on both a human and a Christian level, and these will depend on the region he is in. The objective remains twofold: to give the seeker the experience of a fulfilled Christian life as a missionary disciple, and to provide what he needs in order to discern and respond to his vocation.

§2 For this, the candidate must have:

- A level of autonomy and stability that enables him to be truly engaged in studies or work, as well as a healthy lifestyle and healthy relationships.
- An active Christian life that he practices in the place where he resides, knowledge of the faith, and, if possible, a commitment to mission and service to the most in need. The observer must already be living the five essential elements of the Christian life (prayer, doctrine of the faith, fellowship, service, and mission). In some regions, the period of observership can be spent in a school of evangelisation.

§3. The brothers will ensure that the candidate is supported by a spiritual accompanier and that he is given the means to progress in his discernment and choice. If and when the time comes for him to apply to become a postulant, the candidate must go on an accompanied retreat of several days. This can take place within or outside of the Community. If the candidate's spiritual accompanier is a brother, the candidate will be encouraged to speak at least once with a priest or a consecrated man or woman who is not a member of the Community.

a) Discovering religious life and our charism

369. §1. Observers of the community must be given sufficient understanding of who we are and what they would be committing themselves to if they were to join us. This understanding is not something that can simply be taught; rather, it comes from experiencing from within what life as a Brother of Saint John could be like for them.

§2. To this end, an observer will:

- Receive formation that will help him understand what a vocation is, how to discover it, the different states of life in the Church, and the characteristics of our charism.
- Stay in one or more of the Congregation's priories, where he will be able to experience the brothers' way of life and some of their apostolic activities. He should also be shown that we form part of the Family of Saint John, alongside the apostolic and contemplative sisters and the oblates.

b) Verifying suitability

370. §1. During this period the community will not only confirm whether the candidate meets the minimum canonical requirements for entry into postulancy (Can. 643), but also that he has:

- A sufficient level of education (depending on the culture: High School diploma or equivalent, College or University degree or diploma, professional experience).
- Sufficient reading and experience to have provided him with a general cultural foundation.

§2. A frank dialogue will be had with the candidate to check that there are no major impediments to him entering the postulancy.

2. Personal accompaniment of the observer

371. Those undertaking observership will be accompanied by a designated brother with whom they can meet regularly. The brother who accompanies candidates will be appointed by the prior, after consulting his conventual chapter, the provincial delegate for formation and the Prior Provincial. He will undertake his responsibilities and his work of discernment in consultation with the Postulant Director and the Novice Master. The brother accompanying the candidates may be the same person as the Vocations Promotor. However, he must possess the ability to accompany people on a personal level.

3. Admission to the postulancy

372. §1. When the process of discernment during the period of observership comes to a end, the observer will go on a retreat for discernment. If he decides he would like to join the community, he will need to make a written request to the Prior Provincial in order to enter the postulancy in our Congregation. No one may enter the postulancy without a clear expression of desire to be a Brother of Saint John.

§2. The Prior Provincial, after consulting those who have accompanied the candidate, will ask the conventual chapter that welcomed him to decide on his admission to the postulancy.

4. The length of observership

373. The length of this period will vary according to each individual's growth and discernment. It is desirable that the Ratio Formationis Provincialis indicate the minimum desired duration of observership—in the spirit of PI 29.

III. POSTULANCY

374. §1. The postulancy is a preparation for the novitiate and a means of verifying the suitability of a candidate before he applies to enter the community. Entry into postulancy is made at a priory of the Congregation which is authorised by the Prior Provincial to admit postulants. The postulant is entered in the registers of the Province and the Congregation from the beginning of his postulancy.

§2. Depending on the place, the postulancy may be carried out while living in a priory or in a non-residential capacity (allowing the postulant to continue his studies or professional work while regularly visiting a priory). It is up to the Ratio Formationis Provincialis and the local postulancy programme to determine the conditions. In both cases, care should be taken to ensure:

- That the postulant meets regularly with the Postulant Director—this condition excludes the reception of a candidate into postulancy who lives in another country and/or at a great physical distance from the priory to which he is linked (*cf.* Dir. 30.1).
- That a clear distinction be made between the period of postulancy and the novitiate; indeed, during the period of postulancy the candidate must retain his freedom and autonomy (financial, links with his local surroundings and family). This period is, in fact, a time to ripen discernment and confirm the candidate's initial choice to undertake religious life in our Institute, as the candidate is not yet a member (*cf.* PI 44).

1. The programme of formation during postulancy

375. Formation during this period has three main objectives: to continue to strengthen the foundations of the Christian life according to its five essential elements, to judge a candidate's suitability, and to prepare him to enter our way of life. Each postulancy will therefore put in place a programme of formation that meets the following main objectives.

a) Human formation

376. **§1.** While the novitiate is a time for laying the spiritual and religious foundations of our consecrated life, the postulancy which precedes it is a time for human formation and for checking the foundations upon which our consecration to God will rest.

§2. To this end:

- During this period, it is important that the postulant begins to enter into self-knowledge and that he desires to deepen that knowledge and gain greater clarity of vision over his personal history.
- It is particularly beneficial for him to become more conscious of his family upbringing, to be able to see both the richness and the limitations of his culture of origin, and to be able to be open to another culture, especially if he is to undertake his novitiate in another country. It is strongly recommended that the Postulant Director meet or even visit the postulant's family, provided this has not already happened before he entered the postulancy.
- Those in charge of formation will be particularly attentive to the postulant's ability to lead a consecrated life in a community of people of the same sex. To do this, they will consider the postulant's psychological balance (possible pathologies, prohibiting weaknesses, etc.) and his emotional balance (dependency, addictions, low self-esteem, overdeveloped ego, immaturity in relationships, disordered sleeping and eating patterns, etc.), "especially sexual balance, which presupposes the acceptance of the other, man or woman, respecting his or her own difference" (PI 43). It is also important for the postulant to develop a balanced relationship with the digital world in his life (combating addictions to the internet, pornography, gadgets, and games).
- Depending on local legislation and taking into account everyone's right to privacy (*Cf.* Can. 220), all candidates will take a psychometric test at the beginning of the year. They will be given the opportunity to receive professional support if required, with a preference for carrying out in-depth work at this stage rather than during other stages of their initial formation, especially the novitiate.
- Through organised sessions and accompaniment, postulants will receive formation that will enable them to come to know themselves better as human beings and acquire certain fundamental work habits and conduct in relationships.

b) Spiritual formation

377. **§1.** During this period, care will be taken to ensure that the postulant employs the necessary means to enter into the spiritual discernment of his vocation, that he deepens his personal interior life with the Lord, and that he nourishes his spiritual life and builds on his knowledge of the Bible as well as the doctrine of the faith. The postulant's formators are, for their part, required to verify the degree of Christian maturity he has reached, since we cannot admit to the novitiate "candidates who have not completed their Christian initiation (sacramental, doctrinal, and moral), and lack some of the elements of an ordinary Christian life" (PI 43)—formation during postulancy is therefore focused on the five essential elements of the Christian life, the discovery of the religious life, and the discovery of our charism.

§2. To this end:

- The postulancy will be an introductory school of prayer, providing fundamental and practical formation in the life of contemplative prayer, an introduction to lectio divina, the simple and beautiful recitation of some of the Liturgy of the Hours, and daily prayer of the rosary.
- Postulants will be encouraged to experience the sacraments more intensely (if possible, daily Mass and regular confession) and will receive basic liturgical catechesis.
- Formators will organise sessions to help the postulants enter into spiritual discernment of their vocation and will ensure that they are properly accompanied on their spiritual journey.
- Postulants will undertake a guided reading of the Bible (particularly the writings of Saint John) and will learn to meditate on the readings of the day's Mass. They will have a library available for their spiritual reading.

§3. At the end of the postulancy, each candidate will go on a retreat for spiritual discernment before applying to enter the novitiate. In order to foster the candidate's freedom, it will be advantageous if this retreat does not take place in a priory of the Congregation and is not preached by a brother of the Congregation.

c) Formation in our charism and the specific nature of religious life

378. §1. It is important that postulants become familiar with our charism, our spiritual patrimony, and our history, with its lights and shadows. They should also gain a good understanding of the specific nature of religious life and the place of the priesthood in our Community.

§2. To this end:

- The brothers will provide formation on these subjects and will be attentive in their accompaniment to clear up any ambiguities that remain.
- The brothers will also need to verify that the postulant is capable of living in community under the authority of superiors. "This capacity certainly will be verified further during the course of the novitiate, but the question should be posed in advance. Candidates should be well aware of the fact that other ways exist by which to give all of one's life to the Lord, apart from entering a religious institute" (PI 43).
- The Postulant Director will provide candidates with sufficient information on the major impediments to religious life and to access to the priesthood, as well as the process of discernment and criteria for admission to both perpetual profession and Holy Orders.

d) Intellectual formation

379. §1. The postulant must already be made aware of the important place our Congregation gives to the search for truth, to study, and to the "diaconia of truth" in the apostolate. In addition, every effort should be made to ensure that he is prepared to enter into our programme of studies.

§2. To this end:

- Postulants will be introduced to certain philosophical and theological subjects through reading texts, participating in accompanied or informal discussions, or through regular teaching, and in this way, brothers will try to awaken their interest in the major questions facing mankind and the Church.
- The postulant's general programme will include exploration of the writings of St John, especially his Gospel, along with a guided reading of the rest of the Bible. In addition, he will

receive a course on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, with a continuous and complete reading of the first part (section I on faith) and the third part (on life in Christ).

- Formators will need to verify that the candidate has a sufficient general cultural foundation. This should correspond to “what is generally expected of young persons who have achieved the normal education of their country” (PI 43).
- It is important that the postulant has a sufficient command of the language spoken in the novitiate. To gauge the level of his ability, he must take the relevant standard language proficiency test(s).
- The brothers must make every effort "to promote the [postulant’s] original culture carefully, and not assimilate it into a foreign culture. It is within their own culture that candidates [...] must recognize the call of the Lord and respond to it in a personal way" (PI 43).

e) Apostolic formation

380. §1. Following the period of observership, the postulancy will continue to be a school of evangelisation and service of the poorest. Apostolates should be chosen and prepared in such a way as to allow the postulant to discover apostolic life as an essential part of the community's charism.

§2. To this end:

- Postulants will receive sufficient training to prepare them for the apostolates entrusted to them.
- As far as possible, postulants will be part of a team with whom they will learn to carry out and evaluate an apostolic mission.
- Formators will carry out an evaluation at the end of the postulancy with the individual candidate and with the team. This will cover in equal measure both the fruits that have emerged over the course of the various missions and the way in which the postulant engaged in those missions and positioned himself in relation to the people involved.

2. Personal accompaniment of the postulant

381. Accompaniment given by the Postulant Director, the spiritual accompanier, and the community are privileged means of fostering personal integration of the formation received. For this reason, those responsible for the postulancy will attach particular importance to accompaniment.

a) Accompaniment given by the Postulant Director

382. §1. The Postulant Director will be a perpetually professed brother appointed for this task by the Prior Provincial; he will be a formator for the external forum only and will not undertake the role of a religious authority. He will be responsible for facilitating the programme of formation and will accompany the candidates on their progressive journey of discernment and discovery.

§2. To this end:

- He will provide postulants with activities and experiences that will help them to discover the Congregation and the consecrated life, as well as God's call. He will also supervise the activities of the formation programme.
- He will encourage the other members of the priory to fraternally cooperate in this accompaniment and to offer witness to the Gospel.
- He will work closely with the vocations promoter who previously accompanied the candidate and the Novice Master who will accompany him following the postulancy.

§3. The brothers chosen for this office must be properly rooted in their mission and the ecclesial environment. They will receive formation in how to listen, spiritual discernment, and accompanying people. In view of the struggles and fragility often experienced by today's postulants, the Postulant Director must acquire the necessary skills and competency in education, the spiritual life, and the human sciences. It is strongly recommended that he form a pedagogical team and work as a group.

b) Spiritual accompaniment of postulants

383. Every postulant must have a spiritual accompanier with whom he meets regularly and who helps him discern and grow in inner freedom. The accompanier will help the postulant to retrace his vocational story and put into words why it is he wants to choose, or choose not, to become a Brother of Saint John. He will help verify what the postulant hears the Lord saying and will give him the keys to move forward in his vocational choice. He will pay particular attention to preparing and reviewing the discernment retreat at the end of the postulancy.

c) Accompaniment by the community

384. Through their contact with the postulants in the activities in which they participate (apostolates, services, gratuitous time together, etc.), the different brothers of the priory accompany, at their own level, the ripening of the candidates' vocational discernment. For this reason, the conventual chapter, in conjunction with the Director of Formation, must ensure that community life and activities with the postulants are conducive to their personal development.

3. Admission to the novitiate

385. §1. At the end of the programme, the postulant who wishes to join the community must make a written application for admission to the novitiate. The Prior Provincial then forms an admissions council to examine the application and give their opinion on the candidate's suitability. The council will be made up of the Postulant Director, Novice Master, and at least one brother appointed by the Prior Provincial.

§2. Each member of the council will have access to the candidate's file, provided by the Postulant Director. The file will contain a report from the conventual chapter of the priory where the candidate made his postulancy, which will have expressed its views in a consultative vote, as well as all the necessary canonical documents and references (baptismal certificate, letter from the superiors of a seminary or religious community in which the candidate spent time, criminal record, medical check-up report, etc.).

4. Provincial amendments

386. §1. The Ratio Formationis Provincialis will determine the following specific factors:

- Whether the postulancy will be residential or non-residential—and if non-residential, what the programme of formation will be and the minimum criteria of participation.
- Criteria specific to the province for entry into the novitiate—especially with regard to the level of studies required, age limit, etc.
- The level of language required and the necessary language tests to be passed for the novitiate.
- The way in which entering the postulancy is marked, if at all.
- The composition of the admissions council, the contents to be put in a candidate's file, and the method of discernment.

Chapter 15
NOVITIATE

387. §1. "They [...] saw where he was staying; and they stayed with him that day" (Jn 1.39). On entering the novitiate, each brother is invited to enter into the experience of the disciple whom Jesus loved. This particular period begins on the day the brother enters the community and lasts eighteen months (except in special cases – *cf.* Const. 36), "of which two consecutive months are spent in one of the Congregation's places of desert" (Const. 33 §2).

§2. The primary objective of novitiate formation is to introduce each brother to our form of religious life. In addition, the novitiate is a time of personalised accompaniment, according to a programme of formation in a formative community. Under the guidance of the Novice Master, the novices take their first steps in the Community, seeking to make the charism of our Institute their own. Lastly, the period of the novitiate is a time of probation when the novice continues his journey of vocational discernment with the community and prepares to commit himself to a life according to the vows.

I. FORMATION PROGRAMME

388. Because the novitiate is a time of initiation, the main objective of the formation programme is to help the novice enter into a spiritual and human experience, namely that of being a Brother of Saint John. Consequently, although the formation offered in the novitiate embraces the various dimensions of formation, it pays particular attention to the spiritual dimension (*cf.* PI 35) and to deepening the charism.

1. Spiritual formation

389. The aim of this stage of religious life is to initiate the novice into following Jesus chaste, poor and obedient, and to strengthen his union with him in accordance with the charism of the Brothers of Saint John. This involves accompanying the brother so that he might open himself to the grace of the Spirit in such a way that, in his whole person, he enters into a permanent process of conversion and transformation in the Gospel. For this reason, the novice's spiritual formation has three objectives: an initiation into listening to the Lord in his life in order to follow him; the centring of his whole person on Christ; and adopting our way of life.

a) Introduction to following Christ

390. §1. The spiritual life in accordance with our charism is founded on friendship with Christ. This friendship is first experienced in contemplative prayer at the level of the "heart," understood in the biblical sense of the term. The first path of spiritual formation to be followed is therefore that of interiorisation and the discovery of the depths of the heart; what God loves is "truth in the depths of the heart" (Ps 51:6, Grail Psalms). The Novice Master will remain vigilant that such a journey does not lead to the novice becoming closed in on himself, but to an authentic encounter with God, to true access to himself, and to being open to his brothers. To encourage recollection and interiorisation, the community of formation will try their best to provide a suitable environment for the novitiate, one that is conducive to the requirements and particular rhythm of the novitiate and that maintains a climate of silence.

§2. Encountering Christ enables the novice to follow him, provided he has learned to listen to his voice (*cf.* Ps 94.7). For this reason, the novice brother is introduced to the art of spiritual discernment, so that he might learn the means of listening authentically to God, as well as listening to himself in God. By reviewing events and lived experiences in different ways, both on a personal level and in community, he will learn to put into words the spiritual realities that are at play in his daily life. Through this listening and review, the novice is led to follow Christ and choose according to God's will.

b) Centring one's whole person on Christ

391. §1. The centre of the whole person is Christ present in the heart. Through prayer, it is first of all towards this centre and from this centre that the brother's person finds unity. Consequently, the novitiate is a school of prayer and spiritual life in which the Novice Master introduces the brother into the liturgical life, the different forms of prayer, and the elements of the spiritual life. This introduction, at the school of the Bible, the Fathers of the Church, and the spiritual masters, takes place primarily through dialogue and general accompaniment, while providing content through the novitiate's teachings and chosen readings. It is also achieved by establishing a routine and participating in specific activities that encourage interiority and the integration of the elements of the spiritual life. This will include times of solitude, particularly during the two months of desert. It aims to help the novice enter into a form of prayer that permeates his whole life and enables him to live in, through, and with Christ.

§2. Learning to welcome the word of God into one's heart and life is a decisive point of spiritual formation in the novitiate. In fact, it brings about a transformation of the whole person so that he becomes a person of the Gospel, in the likeness of him who is the Word made flesh. Consequently, novices "should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids" (*cf.* DV 25). In this way, pride of place is given to daily lectio divina, as well as to introductory courses on the Bible. The Novice Master will ensure that the young brothers integrate the word of God as a way of life and will introduce them to the spiritual tradition of lectio divina (*cf.* DV 86-88). In the same way, he will help the novices to better discover Saint John, as presented in the Gospels, the Tradition of the Church, and the Magisterium.

§3. The Novice Master has the mission to help the novice unify his life in a peace of heart which comes from the Lord. Attending to the interior life like this is achieved by learning the tradition of the watchfulness of heart. The novice, especially in his second year, must become aware that not everything that arises in his heart comes from God, but that a thought, a passion, or an inner feeling can have various origins, as the tradition of the discernment of spirits helps us to understand (*cf.* 1 Jn 4:1). Attending to the heart in this way introduces the novice to a new kind of spiritual combat, which requires him to actively choose and to be ever increasingly the guardian of his own heart. The Novice Master will make every effort to ensure that every novice carries out a serious, daily examination of conscience, without focusing solely on sin, but first and foremost on discovering God's action in his daily life. Opening up his heart and the writing of a spiritual diary can help the novice better express himself and become aware of what the Lord is doing in his day-to-day life. The accompaniment provided to the novice should help him to follow Christ, to let himself be formed by Christ, to discover the ins and outs of his consecration on a personal level, and to begin to make our way of life his own.

b) Adopting our way of life

392. §1. To follow Christ in the novitiate is already to live by the charism of the Community, a gift that the Lord gives to each brother and that he begins to deposit in the heart of the novice. Through fraternal life in community, regular prayer, accompaniment by the Novice Master, practice of the vows, study of the Constitutions and the writings of Saint John, and the many experiences of our life, the novice learns to become a Brother of Saint John.

§2. The covenant the novice makes with the Lord is inseparably a covenant with his community and its members. The sacred narrative of his own life is inscribed in that of the Brothers of Saint John. The novice must therefore be able to explore both his own history and the history of the community. For this reason, the Novice Master will help the novice reread his history, articulating what has built him up, what has wounded him, and the times God has been present in a particular way, and thereby gradually discover his life as a sacred narrative in which God is at work so that they might live in covenant.

§3. The sacred narrative of the novice's life now continues to unfold in a fraternal life in community in accordance with the vows. In this sense, as the months go by and with the help of his formators, the novice will be able to integrate what is proposed to him as a programme for life. Immersion in a particular religious community thus enables the novice to take on its charism, its history, and its spiritual patrimony. In this way, the novitiate is a religious experience that enables the brother to deepen the reasons for the choice he makes, to understand his life as a journey with the Lord, and to internalise the values of the Community.

2. The human dimension

393. The main objective of human formation in the novitiate is for every novice to be able to live as a free person who is responsible for his vocation, and therefore capable of giving himself to the Lord and his brothers in truth.

a) Self-knowledge

394. In order to be able to give himself, the novice must first be able to become himself; and the first step in this process is to become aware of who he truly is. In order to come to this self-knowledge, the novice must first learn to access his inner world and experiences. He will then be better able to choose those aspects he wants to allow to grow within himself, those he can shoulder, and those he must simply accept. A journey like this cannot be undertaken without a programme of formation (classes, sessions, accompaniment) that will help the novice to be able to articulate who he is whilst also being truthful about himself. A programme of formation that does this will enable the novice to reach authentic self-acceptance.

b) Acquiring specific virtues

395. §1. Self-acceptance and an awareness of what dwells within us and makes up our personal history are the foundations for moving towards human maturity. Upon this human foundation the novice, together with his formators, will be able to discern the way he should proceed in order to acquire the virtues necessary for his new form of life: humility, purity of heart, docility, chastity, poverty, obedience, the ability to choose based on spiritual and reasoned discernment, faithfulness to his word, and the acquisition of good work habits in both manual and intellectual work.

§2. Similarly, the novice will be accompanied to help him grow in human and affective maturity and to integrate his affective and sexual development into his spiritual journey. He will thus be helped to integrate his sexuality into his person by becoming aware of his affective needs—whether real or constructed—his sexual impulses, and the profound desires that act on him from within—whether consciously or unconsciously. At the same time, this work of accompaniment will help the novice to find ways to come to terms with his emotional and sexual history and to live out his emotional needs, his sexual drive, and his deepest desires in accordance with the demands of the consecrated life as a follower of Jesus. To this end, classes, sessions, and accompaniment can be arranged with professionals.

c) A sense of the truth

396. The love of truth touches the heart of our charism and vocation. On a human level, this can be interpreted as giving primacy to one's conscience (GS 16). By aiming for this unification of heart and mind, the novice learns to make his word trustworthy and authentic. The school of truth is supported by both an acceptance of reality and the ability to take a measured distance from it, which enables us to make respectful and objective judgements about people, events, and our own cultural norms and opinions.

d) Freedom and responsibility

397. It is important that the Novice Master and the formation team foster "spaces" of responsibility and freedom so that the novice can evaluate himself, his personal autonomy, and his ability to collaborate, and so that he has the opportunity to reflect on the choices he has made. The number of brothers that make up the novitiate communities plays an important role in achieving the personal dynamic sought after. Novitiates should preferably have between three and twelve members, to guarantee both personal and community accompaniment.

3. The intellectual dimension

398. **§1.** The novitiate is a period of initiation into the charism of the diakonia of truth (*cf.* FR 2). It is, of course, by no means a time for academic study. As the first year is canonical, the conditions laid down by Church law will be respected (*cf.* Can. 647 **§3;** 648 **§1-**2). In this sense, the programme of studies must be light (particularly in the first year) and focused on the specific finality of this stage. Consequently, the aim of the novitiate classes will be to enlighten the novice's faith, help him to understand his inner spiritual life and his vocation as a Brother of Saint John, ground his convictions, develop a total gift of self, and strengthen his inclinations and choices.

§2. In keeping with its spiritual finality, the first area of study in the novitiate will be the word of God, and particularly the writings of St John. The aim here is to familiarise novices with the Scriptures so that they can draw on them for a deeper life of faith and a loving knowledge of God. A simple and lively introduction to the Bible will be offered. The Novice Master will give an introduction to the spiritual life at the school of the Bible, the Fathers, and the spiritual masters; he will introduce novices in a practical and accessible way to the essential elements of the spiritual life and the way in which it can be lived out. During the novitiate, the novice will also devote time to reading spiritual authors. Particular attention will be given to an introduction to the liturgy as a means for the novice to exercise his royal priesthood. Lastly, the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Part I – Section 2 on the Creed; Part II, on the celebration of the Christian mystery; Part IV on prayer) will also be explored.

§3. A course on religious life and the vows will be given during the eighteen-month period of the novitiate. The Constitutions will be studied during chapter or in specific classes. Significant aspects of the history of the Congregation and a vision of the Family of Saint John will also be presented.

§4. The objective of having an introduction to philosophy during the novitiate is to address one of man's deepest thirsts: his thirst for truth. It aims above all to help foster wise good sense in the brother and to enable him to become clearer sighted about himself. It also helps address the constant need to re-evaluate his own experience at this stage of formation. Lastly, philosophical inquiry, which must remain simple at this stage of formation, is intended to help the brother to reflect critically upon the conceptions he has of God, the world, and man, which have been conveyed to him by society. The introduction to philosophy will take place gradually and in harmony with the novitiate formation programme.

§5. Certain classes in the humanities will be offered on self-knowledge and the education of affectivity.

§6. The themes proposed and described in detail by the Ratio Studiorum for the novitiate will be adapted at provincial level according to the specific cultural setting.

4. Community formation

399. §1. Fraternal life in community is important for us, especially as a response to Christ's new commandment (*cf.* Jn 13.34-35). Every novice will learn to put this commandment into practice by making it a guiding principle of his relationships with his brothers. Novices will also learn to develop an attentive ear to listen to the Lord and to decipher the way in which Jesus looks at, and loves, each person. This evangelisation of our vision and heart is the source from which all our fraternal life develops. It is recommended that brothers consult the sections of this Ratio which have already developed the theme of spiritual discernment and the way in which a brother learns to perceive the movements of the Spirit, who leads him along the path of authentic love for his brothers.

§2. In a similar way, the novice will learn to enhance the quality of his relationships by establishing relationships that are healthy and mature and by learning to give of himself in order to become a brother to others. This work, which is begun in the novitiate, will become more intense during the period of temporary profession.[183] To this end:

- The novice will foster respect for others, the ability to engage in dialogue, and acceptance of diversity.
- He will learn to relate to his brothers by ensuring he makes room for others, positions himself appropriately, and has the ability to talk about himself.
- He will develop interpersonal relationships marked by cordiality, fraternity, and gratuitousness.
- He will learn to take his place in a group and interact constructively.
- He will develop his ability to adapt, to be optimistic, and to place his qualities at the service of the community.

The Novice Master will take the necessary time to support the novices on their path to acquiring the virtues needed to be a brother.

5. Apostolic formation

400. §1. The entire period of the novitiate is lived in the perspective of our apostolic vocation and with a will to take on the mission of the Congregation. Serving the Kingdom, bearing witness to the Gospel, developing a sense of the Church, and a missionary spirit animate the novitiate experience. Sensitivity to the needs of the world is a stimulus for our vocation, nourishes our prayer, and fosters sharing. It is precisely with a view to mission that the novice develops his gifts and potential.

§2. During the novitiate, particularly in the second year, specific apostolic activities will be offered to the novices. Through the apostolic activities entrusted to them, novices will learn to do everything out of love for Christ and to experience the Lord's love for his sheep by sharing with their brothers and discovering the joy of giving themselves freely.

183. See next chapter.

II. THE PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE NOVITIATE

1. Person-centred formation

401. The ability to give ourselves totally in following Christ presupposes that we know how to welcome his grace into the depths of our person and to respond to his grace in a free and mature way with all our humanity. The first pedagogical objective of our formation is therefore to accompany novice brothers in a conversion to the Lord that reaches the depths of their being (*cf.* VC 68), "so that their every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God" (VC 65).

2. Acting like an adult

402. Spiritual childhood, which is the gateway to the Kingdom (*cf.* Mt 18:3), must not lead to a pedagogy that infantilises the brother. The pedagogy of the novitiate is based on, and indeed promotes, the adult capacity of the novice and uses the principles of andragogy.[184] From the novitiate onwards, the novice will enter into a process of ongoing formation and a dynamic of responsibility for his own formation, learning to place himself at the school of Christ as a missionary disciple and "integrating creativity within fidelity" (PI 67). Consequently, the accompaniment provided by the formators will be personalised and personalising; it will be based on a pedagogy that appeals to the novice's interiority, where he learns to hear the voice of the Lord, but also to his freedom and his ability to be the primary agent responsible for his own formation (*cf.* PI 29).

3. A programme of formation designed as a journey to travel

403. The novitiate is a spiritual experience in the footsteps of Christ. The programme of formation is therefore designed as a spiritual and human journey. To this end, it proposes objectives, pedagogical methods, and stages that make it a process of initiation, probation, and formation. The programme of formation also integrates all the dimensions of formation in a balanced way and according to a pedagogy that at its core focuses on the person of the brother, the action of God, and the integration of relational and community dynamics. Particular attention is given to the need for inculturation and to the community as a formative environment. The programme of formation will be proposed by the Novice Master, in conjunction with the other people involved in formation, and will be ratified by the Provincial Chapter. The way in which a novice adopts this formation programme is a decisive criterion for being admitted to profession.

4. Discernment for the gift of self

404. By learning to discern God in everything he experiences, the novice enters into an attitude of ongoing formation at the school of Christ and can give himself entirely to the Lord in a conscious and free way. It is therefore necessary for him to learn the art of looking for the signs of God in the midst of the realities of life. This art of spiritual discernment is exercised in a particular way by welcoming and integrating the mediations that God gives him (his formators, the community of his brothers, the programme of formation, the Constitutions, the events of daily life, etc.), in a spirit of faith (*cf.* VC 65). In

184. *Cf.* chapter 5, n. 105.

this way, the novice, by experiencing our form of life, evaluates with the Novice Master his suitability for life as a Brother of Saint John, in order to arrive at sufficient moral certainty for vocational discernment.

III. ADMISSIONS

405. §1. There are two admissions councils for profession: one composed of the perpetually professed brothers of the novitiate convent and the other made up of the council of the Prior Provincial. The first council has a consultative vote, the second a deliberative vote.

§2. The perpetually professed brothers of the novitiate convent will meet in conventual chapter to present a reasoned report on the novice's request to make profession and give the results of the consultative vote. The chapter will begin with the reading of the Novice Master's report on the candidate, in which he will discuss the novice's relationship to the charism, the six dimensions of formation, his practice of the vows, and his physical, psychological, and moral suitability for living our life. This will be followed by a period of deliberation, during which everyone will be invited to express their views. At the end of the process, the conventual chapter will proceed to a vote and the prior will send off the report of the deliberations and the vote, after having had it ratified by the conventual chapter.

§3. The Provincial Council will deliberate and vote on admission to profession after reading the various reports and files about the brother: postulancy file, reports of the conventual chapter of the postulancy and novitiate, and reports of the Postulant Director and the Novice Master.

§4. For the criteria for admission to profession, please refer to the document, "Criteria and Norms."

V. THE NOVITIATE HOUSE AND THE NOVICE MASTER

1. The novitiate house

406. The province has the responsibility to provide the people and resources needed to achieve the formation goals of the novitiate. The way the novitiate is organised is governed by a single, fundamental criterion: that the environment and structures put in place are able to transmit the authentic formation of a Brother of Saint John, leading novices to make the aims of the novitiate their own and to internalise its content.

2. The Novice Master

407. §1. The Novice Master is the spiritual guide who coordinates and leads all the activities of formation in the novitiate. He must have a capacity for dialogue and show kindness to others, so that he inspires confidence in the novices; he must demonstrate an attachment to our charism and to the Congregation, apostolic zeal, and the ability to work in a team and create a climate of fraternity. He must adapt to the individual situation of each novice and will do his best to understand the novice's background environment, the education he received from his family, and his previous life experience. He will allow the novices to express themselves spontaneously and must be capable of profound discernment. From the beginning of the novitiate, the novice will place himself under the Novice

Master's governance, open up to him with trust and simplicity, adopt a clear readiness to be formed, and collaborate responsibly.

§2. One of the main tasks of the Novice Master, assisted by the other formators, is to make the novitiate a truly formative community. The community of the novitiate house will accompany each novice in their personalised experience of formation; they will live by the style and spirit of the community's charism, and be open to the context of the province they are in. Conferences, chapters, regular personal meetings, and times of community sharing are the preferred means of achieving this. It is important for novices, where possible, to take part in inter-novitiate formation, so that they might benefit from the broader skillset of those involved and that the experience might act as an introduction to ecclesial life and fraternity with other religious congregations.

Chapter 16
TEMPORARY PROFESSION

408. §1. The period of temporary profession is a time of major growth for the brothers. During this stage, which is characterised by the integration of complexity into the brother's life, young brothers learn to live out their commitment as consecrated men in the many experiences they are brought to face. In this way they gradually progress from a life that is very much guided by others to one with increasing autonomy, such that, at the end of their initial formation, they will be able to act with the full autonomy of a perpetually professed brother (*cf.* PI 59).

§2. This somewhat delicate stage requires appropriate, sustained, and intelligent/enlightened accompaniment, which will provide young brothers with the support they need to grow, support that will gradually diminish over time. The formation of young brothers in temporary profession should lead to the ongoing formation of the perpetually professed.

I. THE PARTICULAR CHALLENGES OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION

409. §1. While the novitiate is a time of discovery (of oneself, of the fundamental elements of religious life, and of the particularities of our Institute), temporary profession is a period of commitment, consolidation, unification, and preparation.

a) Commitment: Through his temporary profession, a brother has freely given himself to God and bound himself to a community. This first commitment introduces the brother to a way of life that requires him to be the subject of his actions, to know how to keep his promises, and to be able to rely on God's grace. We must therefore continue to help the brother during this period of formation to grow in his freedom and responsibility before God and his brothers.

b) Consolidation: After the novitiate, the temporary professed brother will continue to work on making his vocation as a Brother of Saint John his own and on putting into practice the fundamental elements of our life. This time of consolidation is also a time of perseverance so that he might grow and become more rooted in his vocation.

c) Unification: This stage of formation is, furthermore, a somewhat challenging period during which the temporary professed brother must be enabled to unify his life in a gift of self to God. Indeed, during this period the newly professed brother begins his academic studies, takes on responsibilities in the convent and in apostolic life, and often faces a more pronounced spiritual battle. Further to this, his effort to unify his life takes a twofold direction: that of personal appropriation (making his own what is common to all), and that of incorporation (entering into a community body). As a result, this stage requires particularly qualified accompaniment.

d) Preparation: This period is a time of preparation for perpetual profession. In other words, both the brother and the community need to take up the appropriate means of ripening their

discernment. Regular evaluations, retreats, and personal and community accompaniment are all essential elements of this formative period.

II. THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION

410. The period of temporary profession runs from first vows to perpetual profession. It involves different stages of formation: the study of philosophy, placement in an apostolic priory, and, where appropriate, the study of certain elements of theology. Formators will take particular care to ensure that there is no disjointed break between the different stages of formation.

1. Philosophical studies

411. **§1.** Philosophical studies—which during the novitiate (especially in the second year) is no more than an introduction to the search for truth through various classes—will, during simple profession and for a period of at least two years, take on a more academic character. The temporary professed brother will be accompanied during this period to help him draw on his studies to benefit his faith, human growth, and participation in the consecrated life.

§2. Philosophy leads the brother to structure his mind with a view to a deeper understanding of the human person and his relationship with the world and with God; it helps him to develop a genuine love of truth, the measure of which is found in God himself (*cf.* PDV 52). The study of philosophy will help the temporary professed brother to consolidate the foundations on which he can develop his integral formation. By asking questions about the meaning of things, the brother should be able to develop wise good sense that will enable him to lead a unified existence.

§3. Although studies have an important place during this period, the particular challenges of temporary profession that we have just outlined must remain the principal concern at this stage. The brother must be helped to take his first steps in temporary profession and to unify his life around the special way of consecrated life, that form of life which Jesus chose for himself and into which he proposes we enter according to the synthesis proper to our charism.

§4. Formators will pay particular attention to the way in which the temporary professed brother grows in interior freedom, learns to become a brother to others, and takes his place in community life.

§5. After his first initiation into apostolic life during the novitiate, the period of temporary profession aims at providing initial formation, both theoretical and practical, in the exercise of certain apostolates. It is important that the brother be placed in a position of responsibility, while being closely monitored as regards the way in which he exercises his responsibility and the way in which he positions himself with respect to others.

2. The period of placement in an apostolic priory

412. **§1.** The period of apostolic placement has three main objectives: 1) to give the brother the opportunity to experience life in an apostolic priory, which is how he will spend the rest of his life as a brother after perpetual profession; 2) to enter into the final stage of his vocational discernment with a view to perpetual profession; 3) to experience an intense formation in the apostolic life.

§2. Formation in the apostolic life takes pride of place during this period. It is not simply a question of giving the brother apostolic experiences or of offloading onto him apostolates that the priory is struggling to maintain. Rather, it is a question of preparing and implementing genuine

apostolic formation, by putting together a programme of formation which must follow the three following points:

a) It must ensure the brother is able to acquire the necessary skills by providing him with the knowledge and tools he needs to carry out the activities requested of him, particularly through focused training.

b) It must give the brother a variety of apostolic experiences that will help him to familiarise himself with the different facets of apostolic life, which in turn will help him to grow in self-knowledge and begin to discern where his apostolic talents lie, or even an area in which he might possibly specialise.

c) It must guarantee quality accompaniment and evaluation given by working groups (of which he will be a member), by an older brother, or by a competent person who will help him to: gain confidence; come to know himself as an apostle; know where his talents and skills lie and the areas where he needs to grow; learn to position himself appropriately and put in place the frameworks he needs.

§3. By receiving a brother on placement, the conventual chapter commits to form him for life in an apostolic priory. It does this by the way in which the brothers: are invested in the common life; listen to one another and respect one another's differences; take care of themselves and others; and balance the demands of their prayer life, fraternal life, and apostolic life. The prior plays a decisive role here through the regular accompaniment he provides the brother on placement and the way in which he sets up a framework, with his conventual chapter, that will enable the objectives of the placement to be met. This will involve helping the brother to integrate the complexity of the apostolic life into a life unified around his spiritual and consecrated life, one which integrates genuine fraternal relationships and maintains weekly intellectual work.

§4. For most temporary professed brothers, two decisive votes will take place during this period: one by the council for the pathway to the priesthood, and the other by the council for admission to perpetual profession. The Master of the Temporary Professed of the province in which the brother is based and the brother's spiritual accompanier will play an irreplaceable role in accompanying the brother in his vocational discernment. Together with the prior of the apostolic priory where the brother is on placement, they must ensure that the brother is able to follow a discernment retreat each year in order to prepare for the applications he wishes to make (priesthood, perpetual profession). In particular, the Master of the Temporary Professed must ensure that the conventual chapter where the brother resides is prepared for the evaluations it will need to undertake and is able to draft a report following each evaluation, which will be presented to the orientation or admissions council. The broad outlines of the report will also be communicated to the candidate.

3. Theological studies

413. Temporary professed brothers sometimes begin their theological studies before perpetual profession. The responsibility for preparing the brother for perpetual profession then falls to the formators of the priory of formation and especially to the Master of the Temporary Professed.

III. SUITABLE PEDAGOGY

414. "The pedagogy of this stage will therefore aim at permitting young religious to make real progress by means of their experiences according to a unity of perspective and of life – that of their own vocation, at this time in their existence, with a view toward perpetual profession" (PI 59).

1. General principles

415. §1. In this stage of formation, starting from the principle that we are forming adults and that the brother is the one primarily responsible for his own formation, the formators will use the principles of andragogy to help the temporary professed brother enter into a dynamic of human maturity, ongoing formation, and self-education.[185]

§2. In continuity with the time of novitiate and in a more insistent way, the brother as a person is placed at the heart of the dynamic of formation, while helping him to continue to integrate into the community body so that he learns to speak equally as an "I" (personal autonomy) and as a "we" (community integration). Care will be taken to ensure that the programme of formation and the accompaniment provided are personalised and personalising (allowing the brother to develop as a person) and that the integration of the charism in the different dimensions of formation leads to genuine unity of life.

§3. Along these lines, the formators will be attentive to the continuity and progression of the programme of formation and the accompaniment of the brothers. In fact, this period of formation is one of the most complex, both because of the number of new elements to be integrated and because of the diversity of experiences and contexts encountered (time in a house of formation and studies, then in an apostolic priory). This complexity, as well as the change of place and context, is above all an opportunity for the young brother to prepare himself to face many different experiences in life. While integrating this complexity, care must be taken to allow the young brother to maintain a healthy rhythm of life, which favours study and allows space for interiority; overload is detrimental and can lead to exhaustion or loss of free will.

2. Some specific principles

416. §1. The primary means of formation used by the Master of the Temporary Professed is to hold regular meetings with the brother. During these meetings he can build up mutual trust, accompany the brother in reviewing his life in the different areas of formation, help guide him to autonomous decision making and responsibility, and cultivate the brother's freedom. He will keep private any personal matters the brother spontaneously confides in him. If necessary, he will propose psychological accompaniment for the brother in accordance with the Church's norms in this area.

§2. The chapter for temporary professed brothers is also an important means of formation. It provides general information that will feed into individual discussions with the brothers. It builds the community of the temporary professed and provides an opportunity to answer questions. It enables a young brother to enter into a process of community discernment in collaboration with the other temporary professed brothers.

§3. The structural elements of life in a house of formation normally help the Master of the Temporary Professed accomplish his work: the formation team, frequency of formator meetings, chapters, service teams, etc. It is strongly recommended, where possible, to divide the professed brothers into teams in which they will live out their daily lives in smaller close-knit groups, be able to

185. *Cf.* Chapter 5, n. 105.

share with one another, and complete their community services together. This style of pedagogy gives the brothers the opportunity to experience life in a similar way to which it is lived in priories, where every brother learns to listen to and care for others, to discern together, to build apostolic projects, and to be responsible for community life.

§4. Studies during this period of formation will be carried out in such a way that brothers will be able to meet the academic requirements specified by the norms of the Church. The teachers and formators will therefore ensure that brothers undertake a university-style academic education and at the same time ensure that their studies are aimed at a genuine search for truth and relate both to their consecration and their apostolic life.

§5. In addition to doctrinal formation, temporary professed brothers will receive formation in the apostolic life and be given the opportunity to acquire some know-how through the provision of practical training. This will be achieved by joining apostolic teams where they are not working alone, or ecclesial structures that have procedures for formation and accompaniment. Formators will evaluate these brothers on a regular basis and help them find their feet.

IV. THE PROGRAMME OF FORMATION

417. The particular challenges involved in the period of formation just outlined must be reflected in a comprehensive, phased, and unified pedagogical programme with its own specific objectives and procedures.

1. Spiritual formation

418. §1. Spiritual formation during the novitiate focuses on accessing the heart (the centre of the person where Jesus dwells and where the Spirit teaches us) and on watchfulness of thought in the sense understood by the spiritual tradition. The years that follow build on this foundation and aim more specifically to integrate all the elements of our form of life, so that they are brought into unity around this inner centre. In particular, the brother will learn ways that will enable his discernment, words, and actions to stem from the depths of his heart. This integration tends to bring about a transformation even in the way we feel and enables the brother to enter into the attitude of Christ (*cf.* VC 65).

§2. Formation in spiritual discernment will lay particular emphasis on discernment in our life and our actions. Through prayer, examination of conscience, accompanied individual or community reflection on events, lectio divina, and spiritual readings, the brother will learn to listen to the Lord who leads him in the events of his consecrated, community, and apostolic life. To this end, he will receive formation in the different elements of spiritual discernment in his actions, in the way he conducts himself in his daily life, and accompaniment from the Master of the Temporary Professed and his spiritual accompanier, so that his formation is translated into a way of feeling, thinking, and acting.

§3. The work of integration spoken of above, as well as that of spiritual discernment in our actions, makes the brother's commitment to follow the Lord more concrete and freer; however, it can also give rise to a new form of trial. In addition, other new realities linked to this period of formation make it a particular time of spiritual struggle: the greater intensity of work whilst undertaking study, the responsibilities entrusted to the brother on both a community and apostolic level, a prayer life that often goes through dry patches, trials, and interior nights. Those who accompany the brothers will consequently pay special attention to this reality of spiritual combat. The brothers will be instructed in what the spiritual tradition says about spiritual trials, the means it suggests for living through these moments with God, and for getting through times of desolation.

§4. During the period of novitiate, focus is on the discovery and initial assimilation of the various elements of our charism and traditions. In contrast, during the time of first profession, emphasis is laid on the brother discovering his own gifts and aims to help him discover how these might be put to use within the vocation and charism of our Institute.

2. Human formation

419. §1. The personal commitment involved in the profession of vows, the complexity of the formation programme itself, the freedom, autonomy, and creativity expected of a brother in temporary vows, and the importance of growing in fidelity to one's word, all call for a more intense human formation.

a) Self-knowledge

420. §1. The work of self-knowledge begun during the novitiate continues by developing a greater focus on self-awareness and on what is at play in the decisions the brother makes. In fact, with the greater autonomy and responsibilities entrusted to him, every brother must better discern what he wants, what he consciously and unconsciously seeks, what dwells within him, influences his thoughts, and makes him act, and what vision of the world, of himself, and of God are at play in these decisions.

§2. Therefore:

- Every temporary professed brother will continue to receive formation and accompaniment to enable him to put into words what he bears within (his inner movements, impulses, and desires), to become aware of the areas in which he is not free, and to determine his specific needs. In this way, every brother can continue to grow in listening to his emotions and needs, integrating them into his life as a religious and the renunciations that life can require.
- During this stage of formation, brothers will be accompanied to help them better understand, appreciate, and put into perspective their own culture (geographical and social) in light of the Gospel. Through formation and community discussions, brothers will be led to an awareness of the beliefs, loyalties, and perceptions of the world and of themselves that have shaped them and continue to influence their decisions. They are then called to undertake evangelical discernment and work on the way they feel and react and on their vision of the world inherited from their family culture.
- Lastly, brothers will continue the re-reading of their sacred history, which they began in the novitiate, with particular emphasis on how their history influences their decision-making. An important task will be to learn to integrate their gifts and strengths, but also their limitations, weaknesses, and failures, in order to arrive at a reconciled vision of their history and their present. This will notably involve work on acquiring the behaviours, attitudes, and virtues that orient the brothers toward the Gospel and enable them to act according to God's will.

b) Freedom and commitment

421. §1. When a brother makes his profession, he gives his word and commits to being a full member of the community. He must therefore establish his choice within his capacity to be a free person, responsible for his choices, and a person on whom we can rely.

§2. To this end:

- During this period of formation, particular emphasis will be placed on the importance of the brother being able to discern, choose, and act as a subject who can answer for his actions.

- Accompaniment during formation will be personalised in order to help the brother discover more deeply the riches and challenges he bears, so that he might receive the formation given with greater fruit and recognise himself as a unique person.
- Formation should be personalised, in the sense that it enables each brother to grow in responsible freedom. To this end, when accompanying a brother, emphasis will be placed on speaking as an "I" in his relationships, taking care of others and of the community, and accepting the responsibilities entrusted to him without running away from them or using them for his own interests.
- A particular task of formation at this stage is to aid decision-making, the discernment that precedes it, and perseverance in one's choices. Formators will check with the brother that the following conditions are in place when he makes a decision:
    - Does he gather the information needed beforehand and pay sufficient attention to reality?
    - Does he have sufficient inner distance from the matter in order to guarantee greater freedom?
    - What conscious or subconscious motivations are leading him?
    - What place is he leaving for God, his religious authority, and the other brothers in the process?
    - How does he plan to verify and assess the quality of his decision-making?

c) A healthy and balanced lifestyle

422. §1. The new responsibilities and complexity bound up with profession require a healthy mind and body. Brothers therefore bear the responsibility of taking care of their body and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

§2. To this end:

Brothers will set aside time for exercise and sport every week.

The Master of the Temporary Professed will accompany brothers in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, ensuring they take the necessary time for sleep, rest, leisure, work, and exercise. Brothers will also take care of the place where they live, making sure it is clean, beautiful, and respectful of their consecrated life.

With this in mind, every brother will collaborate with his formators to check that he is sufficiently respectful of his basic needs[186] and to establish what his specific needs are that will enable him to find a balanced lifestyle.

The brother and his formators will pay particular attention to the way in which he uses social media, IT tools, and means of communication (computers, mobile phones, etc.), the time he spends on them, and the limits he sets himself. To do this, brothers will receive the formation they need to understand how social networks work and the necessary and appropriate discipline needed to remain free when using them.

d) Educating affectivity

423. §1. During the period of novitiate, educating affectivity took the form of knowledge of one's interior world. During the period of temporary profession, greater emphasis is placed on the brother acquiring the virtues necessary to integrate his affectivity into his life, particularly in his relationships with others. Consequently, a brother in this stage of formation is expected to be able to adopt the

186. See Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

position of an adult in his relationships with others, in the exercise of his vows, in the decisions to be made in common or apostolic life, in the way he takes on manual and intellectual work, and in the way he relates to women.

§2. To this end:

- He will receive the necessary formation and accompaniment to help him become aware of the way he positions himself and develop the attitude of an adult. He will be especially helped to: give the other (a brother, any person he meets, his surrounding reality, and even God) the space they need; set boundaries and limits for appropriate and chaste relationships, without letting himself be walked over by someone else or, on the contrary, being controlling over them; adopt a listening, benevolent, and empathetic stance.
- In this way, the brother will learn to internalise the rules so that he can be a free and autonomous subject, capable of entering into relationships based on Gospel, canonical, and civil rules and those of our Institute.
- It is of utmost importance that every brother has the opportunity to hold frank discussions about the best way for him to integrate his sexuality. Every brother must be able to recognise the areas in which he experiences weakness, be able to talk about them, find ways towards greater freedom, and rely on God, his brothers, and, if need be, professional help. In addition, brothers will attend sessions designed to give them necessary guidelines so that they can understand male and female sexuality in their physiological and psychological reality. Brothers will also attend sessions on the stages of affective maturity children go through and the consequences of these for adult life, as well as the particular challenges of affective maturity specific to religious life.
- Brothers will be helped to develop balanced affective relationships based on the Gospel with the brothers and sisters of the Congregation, with their family, and with people outside of the Congregation. In particular, attention will be paid to the ability of the brother to develop friendships that clearly express his consecration and do not give rise to undue expectations in others. By developing healthy habits, undertaking accompanied reviews, and community work in chapter, the programme of formation and the accompaniment given by formators should enable brothers to acquire the virtues necessary for appropriate relationships. In line with an andragogical approach, the brothers in formation should be involved in implementing this programme.
- Particular attention will be paid to the question of addictions that may reappear on leaving the novitiate. It is envisioned that brothers will deal with these issues themselves by relying on their own capacity as adults and by drawing on the support of an accompanier, including professional help if needed.

e) Work and taking on responsibility

424. §1. An important aspect of human formation during this period of formation is work and the taking on of responsibility.

§2. To develop this aspect:

- Formators and the brother will attach great importance to the acquisition of work habits: working attentively, freeing himself from distractions and optimising downtime to aid concentration; working consistently by planning out a schedule for his workload, identifying priorities, and monitoring progress; knowing how to manage his time; getting into the habit of evaluating what has been done to improve the quality of work.
- Every brother will be given responsibilities in the common and apostolic life, along with the preparation, skill acquisition, and accompaniment they require.

- Every brother will learn to be accountable for what he does, review what took place with people who have the necessary competency, and be actively involved in regular evaluations of his work and his practice of religious life.
- The programme of formation and the formators will help the brother to be proactive and creative in work meetings and fraternal time together, while knowing how to cooperate with others in a constructive way.

3. Intellectual formation

425. Following profession, brothers enter a period of academic study. Studies in our community correspond to the requirement of our charism to provide a solid intellectual formation with a view to our consecration and apostolic life; they also respond to the Church's requirements for brothers preparing for the priesthood. However, this period of study is not so much a stage to be completed and then left behind; it is rather an initiation into ongoing intellectual formation. Our aim is therefore first and foremost to provide brothers with the attitude, content, and tools that will enable them to seek the truth in all things through daily study. To this end, our intellectual formation must respond to several challenges.

a) Integrating studies into a brother's daily routine

426. **§1.** First of all, if the brother is to maintain the unity of life experienced in the novitiate while giving himself seriously to his studies, he must find new means of meeting all that is required of him and a new way of balancing his life.

§2. To this end:

- The programme of studies and the schedule of classes will be adapted to the demands of conventual life. The necessary time must be made available for brothers to attend classes and develop habits of personal work, while at the same time enabling them to live their religious life serenely, to respect legitimate needs (rest—particularly in the evenings—sport, free time to relax, etc.), and to be able to engage in apostolic activities.
- Formators will make sure that every brother integrates in a personalised way the balance between studies, fraternal life, contemplative life, and mission.
- Unifying knowledge around the Christian mystery and vocation

b) Unifying knowledge around the Christian mystery and vocation

427. **§1.** Another challenge is the need to unify the brothers' studies around our Christian and consecrated life. "The mystery of the Incarnation will always remain the central point of reference for an understanding of the enigma of human existence, the created world and God himself" (FR 80). In fact, this is an inescapable task that requires singular attention on the part of the brother, teachers, and formators. It presupposes a joint effort by the entire formation team and the teachers.

§2. This challenge can be met through various measures:

- The team of teachers and formators will meet at least once a year to evaluate, among other things, the extent to which the content of the classes and the intellectual work of the brothers are in harmony with the objectives of our faith and our consecrated life.
- In a general way, formators and teachers will ensure that the brothers in formation approach their studies in a spirit of living faith. It is therefore important for the brothers to understand that our intellectual formation is entirely at the service of understanding the word of God in the Tradition of the Church, and that it leads to the practice of the Lord's commandments

and to listening to what the Spirit is saying to his Church. In particular, brothers will learn to integrate the literal sense of scripture on both an exegetical and theological level for use in their lectio divina.

- Brothers who study philosophy will be led to an understanding of its sapiential dimension (FR 81), in an approach that seeks knowledge of the truth (FR 82) and an understanding of themselves and the world with genuine metaphysical scope (FR 83). Formation in philosophy should also give brothers greater awareness of the currents of thought which influence contemporary thinking and their own intellectual or cultural worldview, so that they might discern the aspects of their worldview that are conducive to the faith and those that may prove an obstacle to it.
- Teachers and formators will ensure that theological studies (in conjunction with philosophy) respond to the dual task of serving evangelisation more effectively and leading to the living God and his plan of salvation (FR 92).
- The brothers will be accompanied to help them unite their life of study with the other dimensions of formation.

c) Acquiring good work habits

428. §1. Initiation into ongoing intellectual formation also requires the brothers to adopt habits of intellectual work that respond to the needs of our charism and to the demands of academic studies.

§2. Therefore:

- The dynamic of the classes and studies must be able to awaken a passion for the search for truth, opening the brother's mind to a healthy intellectual curiosity and a spirit of inquiry.
- The team of teachers and formators, together with the brother himself, will monitor the brother's commitment to his studies and the regularity of his accompaniment by a tutor, so that they can help him acquire good work habits (regular attendance at classes, punctuality in handing in work, academic results, etc.). It is important to help the brother give the best of himself without discouraging him.
- Formation should instil in every brother a sense of quality intellectual work that is well done and carried through to the end.
- Every brother will learn to enter into 'dialogic' understanding: to think with others, respect their thinking, and seek to get the best out of them, whether they are the brothers with whom he is seeking answers, his teachers, or the authors he is studying.

d) Work on culture

429. §1. During this stage of formation, it is important that intellectual formation enables a brother to build up both his general and specific culture.

§2. To this end:

- For those who need it, the Director of Studies will set up a refresher course in general culture.
- It is important that our formation develop in young, temporary professed brothers a taste for enriching their knowledge of a wide range of subjects: culture, art, science, etc.
- Work should be carried out on an intellectual level that will provide brothers with a better knowledge of their culture of origin and the way in which they perceive the world. The brother will therefore be given help to discern this area based on ethnological, psychological, philosophical, and theological information.

4. Formation in the vows

a) Embracing a new way of life

430. §1. With his profession of the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, the brother personally commits to make his own the spirit and evangelical life of our community. The aim of formation here is for the brother to adopt the style of life to which the Lord calls him in his most personal self.

§2. To this end:

- In an attitude of listening to the Holy Spirit, the brother will learn to live out the vows through spiritual discernment. Since living in accordance with the vows consists of entering into Christ's sentiments and way of life, only the Lord can reveal to us how to live as consecrated men in his footsteps. The accompaniment the brother receives will therefore help him to apply the rules of spiritual discernment to the way in which he lives out the vows, particularly with regard to obedience, as well as his community and apostolic life.
- The brother must continue to put his vocation and his journey into words that are increasingly more personal: Why did I enter? Why have I stayed? What am I learning from God's guidance about myself and my community? How do I live out the different dimensions of formation in my daily life?
- The brother must be able to express whether he is or is not growing in his attachment to the Institute and his brothers. For this reason, it is recommended that the brother get to know different priories of the Community—for example, by undertaking longer summer apostolates in one place.

b) Going through a grieving process

431. §1. Living in accordance with the vows involves a grieving process, which becomes more acute as the years go by, over the things one naturally desires: possessions, fulfilling relationships, the ability to make one's own decisions in life. As such, the human work to be done at this stage is twofold: working through this grieving process, with its various stages, which is bound up with living in accordance with the vows and leads to necessary renunciation; and working to become aware of one's affective needs, both legitimate and imaginary.

§2. To this end:

- The brother's formation, while enabling him to better understand his real needs, should help him to maintain a heart that is free, capable of choosing evangelical poverty as an expression of his consecration to God, as a guarantee of simplicity in fraternal relationships, and as a source of apostolic fruitfulness. He will thus have to discover the means that will enable him to find the appropriate response to his needs, with a view to living his vows in the joy of the Gospel. In addition, every brother must discover for himself the human attitudes that arise from living in accordance with the vows and that find their source, their strength, and their fulfilment in the Gospel.
- Temporary professed brothers will be led to live the evangelical counsel of chastity in a more concrete way in their relationships with others. They will be encouraged to assume greater responsibility for their brothers and to accept that relationships in the apostolic life are asymmetrical. They must therefore source new wellsprings of joy in celibacy and the gift of their sexuality for the Kingdom. Formation should likewise enable them to experience chastity as a path of freedom that gives them the opportunity to forge authentic relationships. Lastly, together with their formators, brothers should be made aware of the

way they position themselves and the necessary adjustments that need to be made in their relationships with women, children, and anyone in a vulnerable situation.

- The obedience expected at this stage is that of an adult, by which is meant: that the brother sincerely wants to do God's will; that he knows how to perceive more and more clearly what is at work in him and, whether consciously or unconsciously, is leading him forward and motivating his request; that he makes use of the rules of spiritual discernment to verify the authenticity of what he is seeking; that he can enter into fruitful dialogue with those in authority; that he knows how to maintain a free heart in the face of any response from his superior.

5. Formation in community life

432. **§1.** "As in the whole course of religious life, religious must make efforts: to better understand the practical importance of community life in keeping with the vocation proper to their institute; to accept the reality of this life and to discover within it the conditions for their personal progress; to respect others in their differences; and to feel personal responsibility within this same community" (PI 60).

a) Fraternity

433. **§1.** While the novitiate was mainly an initiation into the different elements of our community life, the primary challenge of this new stage is that of becoming a brother to others. The newly professed brother will set himself the objective of developing fraternity in the attention, care, and service he gives to each brother in the common life.

§2. To this end:

- The professed brother will listen to the Lord and accept that fraternal life cannot be built without a great deal of inner work. He will be accompanied to help him find the means of authentic fraternity according to the Kingdom. In order to become part of a community dynamic, the brother must learn and internalise the laws of relationship.
- The temporary professed brother must learn to cooperate with his peers and assume greater responsibility both in fraternal life and in the organisation of the house of formation or the apostolates. To do this, brothers must confront their differences of view and character with courage and kindness, fighting against their egoism so that they can contribute to building up the fraternal community. The temporary professed brother therefore has to enter into genuine combat, in which he will be supported by his brothers and in particular by his authority and his spiritual accompanier.
- To enter into authentic relationship with others, we must first be fully ourselves. The work done in human formation to enable the brother to discover himself as he is, to become himself, and to find the path to true inner freedom, therefore has a direct impact on community formation. Moreover, the fact that brothers become more themselves within the community is a sign of a healthy community life. Community life is therefore an essential place for vocational discernment.
- Formators will be particularly attentive to the way in which the brother positions himself in the community and in apostolic life. He must therefore learn to live authentic fraternal relationships (personal and in community) by taking his place in the community or personal relationship without taking the place of another or allowing himself to be walked over.[187]
- A key point in this process of learning to live fraternal relationships is the discovery of alterity and accountability; for these enable authentic relationships to emerge and to grow.

187. *Cf.* chapter 8, n. 180-185; chapter 10, n. 237.

Brothers will need to bear this in mind and develop an awareness of the challenges faced in relationships, both real and virtual (use of the internet, social networks, etc.).[188]

b) Actively participating in community life

434. §1. Through his profession and commitment in the community, the newly professed brother becomes more responsible for the community and for his brothers. He therefore needs to become an active agent of community life and undertake his duties in a responsible way.

§2. To this end:

- The brother will be given responsibilities in community life which should enable him to acquire the skills he will need for life in an apostolic priory. It is important that brothers learn to give an account of their work to their superior and to their brothers.
- Every brother will work on assuming responsibility in the common life by developing his capacity to: present his point of view in a simple way; encourage and help his brothers to speak out so that they can move forward together in building the common life; integrate an opinion that differs from his own and be ready to change his stance if necessary; recognise his mistakes and ask for forgiveness.
- It is of utmost importance that the brother learns community spiritual discernment, the practices and methods of working in common, and gets into the habit of making evaluations and assessments of different matters in common. In particular, every brother should take part in the annual preparation, follow-up, and assessment of community life.

c) Being a member of a community and a spiritual family

435. §1. During the novitiate, each brother is led to discover that he is the subject of, and responsible for, his own consecration. During the stage of temporary profession, this point will be further emphasised, while helping the brother to discover that he belongs to a religious family. In this way, the brother who is learning to become more rooted in his "I" can also flourish in the "we" of our spiritual family.

§2. To this end:

- Through seminars and the support of their formators, brothers will be able to put into words the cultural and family perspectives they have inherited, which have shaped their vision of what a group is and the way in which they relate to others.
- Work of this nature must be accompanied by sharing together and, ultimately, by welcoming differences in other brothers, so that our differences become a source of richness rather than contradiction or a cause of division.
- Formators will ensure that the brothers in formation take on board our own style of living in community.

6. Formation in apostolic life

436. "The maturation of a religious at this stage will require an apostolic commitment and a progressive participation in ecclesial and social experiences in keeping with the charism of their institute, and taking into account the aptitudes and aspirations of individuals" (PI 62).

a) An apostle's heart

188. See Appendix 6.

437. §1. In line with the novitiate, apostolic formation has its foundation in the development of an apostle's heart, where he learns to act out of love for the Lord and lets himself be evangelised by the heart of Jesus who gives his life for his sheep.

§2. To this end, a brother will:

- Present in prayer to the Lord Jesus the people he has met in his apostolic life, asking for the grace to see them as Jesus sees them, interceding for them and begging the Holy Spirit to show him the way to lead them to Christ.
- Be encouraged to talk with his formators and his spiritual accompanier about how his view of people is evolving, how the Lord is leading him so that he can expand his heart to the dimensions of the heart of the Good Shepherd.
- If he wishes, share with his brothers the joy of giving himself freely, as well as his experiences and discoveries of the wonders of God, the human heart, and the heart of Jesus.
- Increasingly unify his life so that it becomes a continual offering to the Lord and allow authentic pastoral charity to blossom.

b) Integrating apostolic life into religious life

438. §1. Another objective of this stage is to help the brother integrate his apostolic life into his religious life and to test his qualities as an apostle (*cf.* PI 62). To do this, he will review his apostolates with his formators and the people in charge of the apostolates he leads, so as to be able to put into words the way in which he:

- Develops as a person: Do the apostolates help him to grow as a person? Is he gradually able to combine the demands of his religious life, community life, and life of study with those of an apostolic life? What does he learn about himself through his apostolates and encounters with people? Does he know how to take care of himself in his apostolates and does he have a good sense of his needs and limitations?
- Is capable of uniting action and contemplation: How does apostolic life enrich his prayer life? Does he take spiritual discernment seriously in the choices he makes and what place does he give to the Lord in general? Does he attend to his spiritual life when on mission? How does he use the riches of the word of God and the spiritual tradition in the exercise of his apostolic life?
- Is aware of his qualities for the life and mission of the brothers: Can he confirm whether or not his vocation is being strengthened through his experiences as an apostle? What talents does he see emerging in himself? How does the fact of being a Brother of Saint John influence, if at all, the way he carries out the missions entrusted to him?
- Becomes aware of how he positions himself in relation to the people he meets in his apostolic life: Does he take into account his new asymmetrical position as a consecrated brother? Does he know how to take responsibility without assuming an elevated position or, on the contrary, without wanting to be a "buddy" to those he meets? Has he learnt to set a framework and define the boundaries affecting, for example, his privacy and that of others? Does he let others walk over him, does he know how to take his rightful place or, on the contrary, does he maintain a rather rigid or cold distance from them? Does he ultimately make everything about himself, or does he adopt a chaste attitude that seeks the good of the other person?
- Discovers the obedience of an apostle: Does he know how to give an account of the apostolic work he has undertaken to the people in charge and to his superiors? How does he develop cooperation with his brothers, sisters, other people, and institutions? Does he work in an ecclesial spirit, showing that he is part of an ecclesial reality, of which he is a servant?

- Discovers the reality of the world to which he is sent, especially the poorest: Does he perceive the spiritual and human needs of people? How does he react to the various forms of poverty he discovers in people? Does he seek to become one of the poor according to the Kingdom?

§2. Formators will be attentive to the life balance of the young brother apostles and avoid putting them in a situation of stress or overload. They will systematically propose a personal and community review of the apostolates undertaken. It is strongly recommended that brothers be integrated into working groups so that they can learn to live and review their apostolates as a team.

c) Acquiring skills and proficiency

439. §1. The community is committed to preparing the brothers and giving them the skills and proficiency they need in their apostolates.

§2. To this end:

- The apostolic experiences proposed should be characterised by their simplicity and quality, good preparation, community style, with the presence of a guide who accompanies the brother, as well as reflection on the activity carried out.
- During the four years of temporary profession, especially during the apostolic placement, in addition to formation in our apostolic way of life, the community will provide fundamental and practical formation in: parish life and organisation (especially pastoral care of the sacraments and catechesis) and diocesan life and organisation; youth ministry (training as a youth camp leader, for example) and work in a school chaplaincy; pastoral care of the sick and elderly (accompanied experiences in hospitals and retirement homes); means of evangelisation (formation such as that given by the French organisation “Congrès mission,” or with evangelisation groups).
- According to the current recommendations of the Church and civil society, the brothers will receive formation in the protection of minors, people in vulnerable situations, and everything to do with establishing an appropriate framework for relationships with women and for leading a group.

V. PLACES OF FORMATION AND THE ROLE OF THE MASTER OF THE TEMPORARY PROFESSED

1. Places of formation

440. "The institute has the grave responsibility of providing for the organization and duration of this period of formation, and of furnishing the young religious with favorable conditions for a real increase in their donation to the Lord. In the first place, it will provide them a vigorous formational community and the presence of competent instructors. Actually, at this level of formation, in contrast to what was said regarding the novitiate, a larger community, well provided with means of formation and good guidance, is better than a small community without experts in formation" (PI 60).

2. The responsibilities of the Master of the Temporary Professed

441. "The Prior Provincial, upon presentation by the Vicar Provincial for Formation, with the consent of his Council and that of the Vicar General for Formation,[189] in each priory of formation where there are temporary professed brothers, will appoint a Master of the Temporary Professed who is responsible for their formation and exercises authority over them to help them continue their spiritual and religious formation. The Master of the Temporary Professed will be a priest who has made his perpetual profession; he will be appointed for three years and his mandate will be renewable for a maximum of two terms. He will receive suitable formation before taking up his post" (SSP 75).

a) The ministry of the Master of the Temporary Professed

442. §1. Because of the complexity of the ministry involved, assuming the responsibility of the Master of the Temporary Professed requires certain qualities and solid training (*cf.* PI 30). The mission of the Master of the Temporary Professed is threefold:

a) As the person responsible for the formation of the temporary professed, he will set up, coordinate, and supervise their programme of formation and lead the team of formators so that they are on the same page and can cooperate in providing formation.

b) As a mandated accompanier of the religious and spiritual life, he will accompany each brother so that they can complete their journey of vocational discernment with a view to perpetual profession and so that they can grow in freedom, religious commitment, integration of the different elements of formation, unification of their person, and in following Jesus according to our charism.

c) As an authority for the external forum, he will be responsible for forming the brothers in adult-like obedience, listening to the Lord, maintaining a balanced life, and, in cooperation with the prior, providing the conditions that enable the local community to be formative.

§2. Because he is the religious authority of the temporary professed brothers in formation, the Master of the Temporary Professed will: be a member of the Prior's Council; maintain dialogue with the various authorities of the house (prior, vicar, director of studies) about all matters that relate to the functioning of the house; work in close collaboration with the other formators to bring harmony to the programme of classes and other aspects of formation.

§3. As a "spiritual accompanier/director" (PI 63), he must also offer the spiritual, religious, and human accompaniment needed for the formation and vocational discernment of the temporary professed brothers. The brothers under his charge are therefore encouraged to open their hearts to him in an appropriate and authentic way, so that his accompaniment can bear fruit. At the same time, the Master of the Temporary Professed will make sure the brothers have "a person available to them, who may be called a spiritual director or spiritual counselor, for the internal, even non-sacramental, forum" (PI 63).

b) The pedagogical objectives inherent in his ministry

189. Translator's note: the Vicar Provincial of Formation is now called the Director Provincial of Formation and the Vicar General of Formation the Director General of Formation.

443. In his role as a formator and accompanier, the Master of the Temporary Professed has the following responsibilities:

- To evaluate with the temporary professed brother his progress according to the six dimensions of formation, not only by being in dialogue with the brother and the team of formators, but also by observing how he responds to the different demands of life as a Brother of Saint John.
- To ensure the passage from life in the novitiate to life as a temporary professed brother does not entail a sudden rupture in the brother's rhythm of life and, more generally, that continuity of formation is maintained at every stage of the journey of formation: change of place, change of accompanier, departure for and return from placement, etc.
- To maintain a climate of trust and fraternal charity within the community of formation.
- To accompany the temporary professed brother in discerning, on the one hand, his freedom in the relationships he has with his brothers (whether formators or in formation), and on the other, his capacity for responsible participation in the life of the community.
- To help temporary professed brothers discern their potential: aptitude for study, training in order to be able to carry out a service in the community and apostolic life.
- To play a particular role in the brothers' preparation for perpetual profession and in the discernment of their call to Holy Orders. In addition, he will ensure both that religious brothers (lay brothers) are accompanied according to their specific vocation and he will accompany the desire and inner poverty of the future religious-priests as they prepare for the presbyterate.

c) The Master of the Temporary Professed during the period of placement

444. §1. The local prior will accompany the brother on placement in the external forum and will be directly responsible for his formation. During this period, the Master of the Temporary Professed will have the task of supervising the way in which the prior, together with his conventual chapter, assumes responsibility for the brother's apostolic formation, helps the brother on placement to integrate life in an apostolic priory, and helps him to prepare for perpetual profession. In addition, he will work to ensure that every temporary professed brother is accompanied in the internal forum and practices a sacramental life. Before the placement begins, he may ask the prior to propose a list of competent accompaniers and experienced confessors. It is preferable that the Master of the Temporary Professed who accompanies the brothers during their apostolic placement be the same brother who accompanies them during their years of formation in philosophy.

§2. Before the brother leaves for his placement, the Master of the Temporary Professed will meet with the prior of the priory to which the brother is being sent in order to present the brother's circumstances and to assist the prior in his work of accompanying the brother; they will then review the brother's situation together on an annual basis. A mission letter should be given to the prior where the brother will undertake his placement, setting out the objectives to be achieved during his stay. The Master of the Temporary Professed and the prior may call on each other for certain matters relating to the brother, his mission, and his life in community, while remaining attentive to the confidentiality of matters relating to the internal forum and the brother's right to privacy (*cf.* Can. 220).

§3. The brother on placement will meet with the Master of the Temporary Professed once a year to review his situation and to prepare for perpetual profession

VI. COUNCILS AND ASSESSMENTS

1. Pedagogical Councils

445. On a sufficiently regular basis, the Pedagogical Council, chaired by the Master of the Temporary Professed, will meet in accordance with the procedures already set out in Chapter 6. The council will discuss the brothers in formation, their needs, their development, and changes to be made in their pedagogical plan.

2. Reports

446. Every quarter the Master of the Temporary Professed will orally transmit to each brother in temporary profession the main points of the Pedagogical Council's evaluation; once a year, he will draw up a report tracing the brother's formative journey as perceived by the members of the Council and will communicate the main points to the brother concerned. The report will address the brother's relationship with the charism and the six dimensions of formation, his practice of the three vows, his health, psychological balance, and more general balance in life. At the end of the report the council will offer the brother encouragement and recommendations.

3. Council for the pathway to the priesthood

447. The General Chapter of 2022 asked the Prior General that a clear pathway for the call to Holy Orders be given to the brothers at least one year before their perpetual profession. This pathway requires that a relevant council be set up, the details of which will be submitted ad experimentum to the Prior General.

4. Councils for admission to perpetual profession

448. Admission to perpetual profession is the responsibility of the Prior Provincial with the consent of his council and that of the body defined by the Prior General (SSP 77). Deliberation will be carried out in the spirit of Dir. 79 § 2; § 5.

Chapter 17
FORMATION OF YOUNG PERPETUALLY PROFESSED BROTHERS STUDYING THEOLOGY

449. §1. When they start their studies in theology, most of the brothers will have already made perpetual profession. However, their initial formation is not complete until they leave the house of formation. The young perpetually professed brothers are therefore still on a journey of formation that requires accompaniment, even if this is different from that given to the temporary professed.

§2. In a priory of formation, especially when there is a considerable apostolic and internal workload in the convent, it is desirable that the prior be assisted by a delegate to whom he entrusts the task of accompanying young perpetually professed students of theology. The delegate will be appointed by the competent authority (Prior General or Prior Provincial) and receives the authority he exercises from the prior.

I. THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF FORMATION

1. The issues involved in this stage of formation

450. Accompaniment relating to the external forum at this stage of formation focuses on: learning how to live as a perpetually professed brother; support in the brother's journey of formation; the brother's continuing studies; possible discernment for the call to Holy Orders.

2. Accompanying young perpetually professed students of theology

451. §1. The delegate for the young perpetually professed brothers will be responsible for facilitating their group; he will take time to listen to them and to give them advice. His main task will be to help the brothers reintegrate academic study into their lives, while maintaining the missionary dynamic they experienced on placement, with the understanding that mission will take on increasingly more importance. In addition to this, he will accompany them as they take on responsibilities and grow in maturity in the way they cooperate with their authorities. All this requires time and availability on his part.

§2. He will also help the brothers to adopt the habits of ongoing formation proper to the life of a perpetually professed brother:

- Paying special attention to the life of the Spirit, who forms Christ in us and helps us to respond to the challenges of our time.
- Choosing to follow Christ every day in a consecrated life in accordance with our charism.
- Accepting the regularity of our lifestyle as an aid and not an obstacle.
- Integrating creativity into faithfulness.

- Identifying the wellsprings to which he can return in order to recharge his batteries and freely move forward.

§3. With the team of formators, the prior and his delegate carry out their work on the basis of the end of placement reports sent by the priories where the brothers have been placed. In order to assist the brothers in their growth, they hold a biannual pedagogical council with the aim of seeing where each brother is in his journey, his religious life, and his studies. They will go through the points of the report with the brother over the course of their meetings with him following each council.

3. Community life

452. §1. Having learnt to live in an apostolic priory during his placement, the community life of a young perpetually professed brother should remain similar to life in an apostolic priory:

- Living in unity within a small group.
- Fraternal sharing with one another, if possible on a daily basis.
- Community discernment.
- Shared responsibility for organising and running the house.
- Certain apostolates prepared and carried out together.
- Outings several times a year for leisure.

§2. It may be worthwhile having times for shared meals and prayer set aside for the small groups into which brothers will be divided, the frequency of which will be decided by the conventual chapter of the house of formation.

4. Cooperation with external institutes

453. §1. The formation of young perpetually professed students of theology is normally carried out in a Studium of the Congregation or in a collegium attached to an institution of formation. Whatever the form their studies take, they must always be accompanied in the six dimensions of formation, simultaneously as perpetually professed brothers in ongoing formation, young brothers still learning how to live autonomously through the complexity of ever new situations, and, where appropriate, brothers preparing for the priesthood.

§2. "Sometimes a significant amount of permanent religious formation takes place in an inter-institutional context. In such cases, it should be remembered that an institute cannot delegate to external organizations the whole task of continued formation for its members, since in many respects that formation is too closely tied to values proper to its own charism. Each institute, according to its needs and potentialities, should therefore create and organize various programs and structures for the formation of its own members" (PI 69).

II. FORMATION SPECIFIC TO LAY BROTHERS

454. Brothers on the pathway to perpetual profession as lay brothers need their own specific formation to enable them to fully live their vocation as non-clerical Brothers of Saint John. The General Chapter of 2022 asked the Prior General to set up a commission to reflect on their specific vocation, place within the community, and formation.

III. FORMATION FOR BROTHERS PREPARING FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

455. **§1.** Brothers on the pathway to the priesthood must be given the opportunity to prepare themselves for this service to the Church. This point becomes particularly important during the fourth year of theology, which is a year of pastoral formation that takes place outside the house of formation. Brothers will be "inducted into pastoral life, with a gradual assumption of responsibilities in a spirit of service". In addition, the community of formators will provide "suitable preparation, with the help of a specific accompaniment, in view of priesthood" (RFIS 74).

§2. The fourth year of formation in theology, also called the year of "vocational synthesis" in seminaries, has two objectives (*cf.* RFIS 74):

- To be "inducted into the pastoral life, with a gradual assumption of responsibilities in a spirit of service".
- To make "suitable preparation, with the help of a specific accompaniment, in view of priesthood" (RFIS 74).[190]

§3. This year of pastoral formation may include classes with a more pastoral orientation, but this is not the sole focus. They normally take place outside the house of formation in order to be in a formative pastoral context.

§4. During this year, if the brothers concerned have already been ordained deacons, the recommendations of chapter 13 relating to deacons should be taken into account.

190. Translators note: "in view of" here seems to mean "with a view to".

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:
GETTING TO GRIPS WITH THE CONTENT OF THIS RATIO FORMATIONIS

The indications given in Appendix 1 are not binding, but rather aim to serve as a kind of "suggestion box" to help us make fruitful use of the Ratio Formationis Congregationis in the life of the brothers and priories.

I. DIFFERENT PATHWAYS THROUGH THE *RATIO* FOR USE IN COMMUNITY CHAPTER

The *Ratio Formationis* can be used as an aid for the opening exhortation or period of sharing at the beginning of the community chapter. When using the *Ratio* in this context, it is advisable to read a whole section number, on which the prior can then comment, or which can be discussed with the brothers. When the section number is too long for one reading, a part of the section can be read on its own; when the section numbers are short paragraphs, two in a row can be read.

The CRF proposes a "pathway of discovery" over a period of roughly sixty weeks (approximately one and a half years; for example, between January 2023 and June 2024), which will enable the brothers to discover some of the resources present in the *Ratio Congregationis* and to discuss certain important questions.

Week	Number(s)	Theme
1		Following Jesus after the example of John and consecrating ourselves to him
2	14	Becoming beloved disciples of Jesus and abiding in him through a life of contemplative prayer
3	15	Participating in the priestly work of Christ and nurturing a missionary spirit
4	16	Obeying the commandment of love and leading a fraternal life in common
5	17	Seeking truth for the sake of charity and engaging in study
6	18	Being nourished by the Bread of Life at Mass and in Eucharistic adoration
7	19	Taking Mary into our home
8	20	Loving and serving the Church as we await the coming of Christ
9	21	Bearing witness to what we have contemplated
10	22-24	Working for the mission of the Congregation in the Church and in the world
11	25-29	Being formed in our way of life
12	71-72	A path of transformation / Passing from an ideal to reality
13	73	A path of integration and unification
14	82-83 and 85	The brother as the primary person responsible for his formation
15	84	Entering into dialogue with those who partner us in our formation
16	87	Fraternal accompaniment
17	88	The priory as a "formative community"
18	89	Community growth
19	95	Spiritual accompaniment

20	105	Providing education for responsible adults
21	137	Setting out on the path of interiority
22	142	Letting ourselves be habitually led by the Spirit (gifts and charisms)
23	156	Practicing asceticism
24	159	Finding support in spiritual accompaniment
25	161	Reaching spiritual maturity and bearing fruit for the Church
26	165 or 166	Learning to know oneself / Building healthy self-confidence
27	175	Educating our emotional life
28	177	Giving sexuality its rightful place: cultivating the integrity of our person.
29	182	Developing relational maturity: developing chaste relationships
30	188	Keeping in good shape
31	191	Cultivating the joy of life (joie de vivre)
32	196	Coming to a mature vision of man and life
33	202	Desiring the gift of wisdom from the Holy Spirit
34	207	Learning to listen to and think with others
35	208	Getting involved in study projects
36	217	Studying to better keep the word of God
37	222	Self-renunciation in order to follow Christ
38	225	Listening to the Holy Spirit who shows us the daily path of our consecration
39	233	Self-giving with a pure heart
40	235	Developing integral chastity: chastity and our relationship with God
41	242 or 243	Developing a sense of work and responsibility / Choosing sobriety and moderation
42	254	Entering into spiritual discernment with a brother in authority
43	262	Sharing with our brothers and knowing how to talk about ourselves
44	265	Integrating into the group and taking our place in the community
45	269-271	Building the priory community together
46	282	Taking part in the conventual chapter
47	290	Building communion within the Family of Saint John
48	300	Being formed so that our apostolic service might be one of quality
49	305-307	Formation to accompany / teach / preach (choose one aspect)
50	312	Listening to the needs of the people and communities we serve
51	313	Fostering gifts and charisms
52	321-325	Learning to discern our missions and the direction apostolic work should take
53	329 or 330	Taking time out for renewal / Finding support in supervision
54	344	Humble daily faithfulness (NB: 346-347 can be added if so wished)
55	348	Times of desert
56	352-355	Loss of zeal (NB: choice of one of the 4 numbers)
57	357	Accompaniment through crises
58	358	The trial of illness
59	359	Times when the community is tested by a brother
60	360-361	Old age: a time to let go
61	366 or 309	Vocations

II. WORK OF THE CONVENTUAL CHAPTER

1. The involvement of the conventual chapter in formation

The *Ratio* specifies a certain number of recurring responsibilities that fall to the conventual chapter in conjunction with the prior. It is by working to put these in place that each local community engages with formation and puts the *Ratio Formationis Congregationis* into practice.

a) *Defining the priory's core values*: this can be achieved by agreeing on the priory's guiding values, which will help to inspire balance in the community and enable a vision of community life to be developed together (RF 270).

b) *Defining how the priory operates*: this can be achieved by establishing a customary for the priory (RF 271); by defining the frameworks that give everyone their place in the priory, specifying the rules of the community and guaranteeing comprehensibility of community life and a certain security of relationships within it (RF 88 §3); by defining responsibilities and the ways in which they should be carried out in customaries that will be regularly updated (RF 265 §3); by taking responsibility for the administration of temporal goods and ensuring an equitable sharing of resources (RF 249 §3; 247).

c) *Defining a community programme of formation*: this can be achieved by establishing a programme of formation specific to the priory (RF 90; see Appendix 4). For houses of formation, this involves defining a "local programme of formation" (RF 109; see Appendix 4).

d) *Fostering the engagement of every brother in his own formation*: this can be achieved by giving the brothers the means to competently carry out the responsibilities they receive in the priory, and allowing them, if appropriate, to benefit from corresponding training (RF 266 §3); by encouraging every brother to use his qualities and gifts boldly (RF 313 §3)—especially those who are undertaking their first assignment, young deacons, and young priests—while not overwhelming them with tasks and responsibilities (RF 336-338); by accompanying those who are in difficulty or suffering (RF 358-363).

e) *Facilitating the daily life and faithfulness of the priory*: this can be achieved by discerning how to live the religious life on a daily basis and how to incarnate the vows in local circumstances (RF 266); by establishing a balance between the different constituent aspects of community life as well as between personal autonomy and common obligations, making sure that every brother knows how to take his place in the community while at the same time giving others the space they need to be themselves (RF 236); by working through crises with serenity (RF 279-d).

f) *Assisting the initial formation of young brothers*: this can be achieved by promoting vocations (RF 309; 366); by taking one's part in the admissions process (RF 110; 406; 447-449); by helping to create a formative environment for young brothers on placement (RF 412 §3).

g) *Ensuring the priory is functioning properly*: this can be achieved by setting up procedures for speaking at community meetings, so that everyone can fully take their place during the meeting—and their place alone (RF 265 §2); by following the rules of community discernment (RF 282 §2); by evaluating the various dimensions of community and apostolic life at least once a year (RF 89 §3); by carrying out a clear-sighted critique of the priory's objectives, procedures, and results, and being able to accept them in thanksgiving (*idem*); by becoming able to receive external criticism (*idem*); by drawing on the accompaniment of the Prior Provincial and any expertise that may be brought in when necessary (RF 92).

h) *Reading the history of the priory as a sacred histor*y: this can be achieved by remembering everyday events with thanksgiving; by becoming clear-sighted about the influences of the past—some of which have been significant; by regularly updating its archives (*cf.* RF 278 §3; 89 §3).

2. Suggestions for implementing the *Ratio*

Defining the priory's core values	Hold a session of the conventual chapter to answer the questions posed in RF 270. Write down the answers that seem important in a document that could eventually be added to the priory's customary.
Defining how the priory operates	At the beginning and end of the year, review the priory's customary with respect to offices and duties, their definition, and the responsibilities of each brother. Ensure that the customary is written down and available to all the brothers.
Defining a community programme of formation	At the beginning of the year, take stock of the community's needs in terms of ongoing formation and select one or two priorities to be addressed during the year, as well as the means of addressing them (reading in the refectory, theme of a conventual chapter or of community intellectual work, organised meeting with a specialist, participation in a seminar, etc.).
Fostering the engagement of every brother in his own formation	The chapter should offer a framework conducive to formation. At the beginning of the year, set the conditions together that will enable everyone to participate in ongoing formation.
Facilitating the daily life and faithfulness of the priory	Every chapter is already doing what needs to be done: making decisions that will help the priory to live out its vocation to the best of its ability in local conditions.
Assisting the initial formation of young brothers	Schedule chapter sessions to prepare the necessary reports for the relevant brothers during the year. If the priory accepts a brother on placement, put in place, in conjunction with the Master of the Simply Professed of that province, the means of accompanying him.
Ensuring the priory is functioning properly	Every three years—unless there are problems that arise and increase the need for frequency—take stock of whether the chapter is functioning, whether each of its members is taken into account, whether there is freedom to speak, whether there is an ability to listen to external criticism, etc.

Reading the history of the priory as a sacred history	At the end of the year, and perhaps more frequently, take time in chapter to review the year in light of the word of God. Decide what should be noted in the priory archives. If an archiving system does not yet exist, ensure that one is set up (check with the provincial archivist).

III. READING BY THEME

For those who prefer to approach formation from a particular angle, it is possible to select (from the Contents or Index) paragraphs of particular interest, to concentrate on one chapter, or to follow one of the following pathways.

1. Leading the life of an apostle

Participating in the priestly work of Christ and nurturing a missionary spirit: 15; bearing witness to what we have contemplated: 21; working for the mission of the Congregation in the Church and in the world: 22-24; a challenge for consecrated life today: 41; a constitutive dimension of life as a disciple of Christ: 68; a requirement of the spiritual life: 143; developing a spirituality of mission: 153; developing human balance: 169-173 (work), 179 (fruitfulness and the gift of self), 180-185 (relational maturity), 188-191 (life balance); placing our intellectual formation at the service of our mission: 214, 219; forming ourselves to become apostles: 293-330; the joyful experience of spiritual fruitfulness: 346; supporting mission in old age: 361; initial formation for mission: 380 (postulancy), 400 (novitiate), 436-440 (temporary profession), 413 (placement).

2. Taking care of one another

Caring for the charism and —[191] :33 **§2;** everyone must be able to find their place in fraternal life: 40; the need for — : 56; fraternal accompaniment: 87; a formative community where we — : 88; chastity and — : 236; fairness and a sense of sharing: 244; becoming brothers: 257-262; building a supportive environment: 272-273; authentic fraternity as a prophetic sign: 291; — in periods of new beginnings: 335-338; — in transitions: 339, 280; celebrating faithfulness: 346; taking time for a break: 358; accompanying sabbaticals: 351; — in times of more intense spiritual combat: 352-359; caring for elderly brothers: 360.

3. Following Jesus after the example of John

John as the inspirational figure of our charism: 13-21; becoming a disciple of Christ: 66; the strengths of our charism for formation: 67; abiding in Christ: 137-139; the role of the Paraclete: 140-142; being nourished by the prayer of Jesus and remaining in continual prayer: 148; letting ourselves be consecrated in the truth: 199; learning at the school of masters: 212; walking in truth: 216; unity of consecration and mission: 294; participating in Christ's zeal: 296; witnessing to what we have seen: 302; John as an inspirational figure for young people: 315; John's vocation as a pattern for

191. Translators note: the dash indicates the paragraph title. In this instance, “Caring for the charism and taking care of one another”.

welcoming vocations: 365; the writings and figure of John in initial formation: 377 (postulancy); 379, 391, 398 (novitiate).

4. Deepening our life of contemplation

Deepening the charism of the Congregation, which shapes our spiritual life: 12-24; learning to lead a mixed life of contemplation and apostolic activity: 26; incorporating elements of monastic origin: 29; letting ourselves be configured to Christ: 66; a journey of self-giving that requires us to pass from an ideal to reality: 71-74; cooperating in the work of God, who is the primary agent in our formation: 81-86; finding support in spiritual accompaniment: 95; learning to lead a life with Christ through the Spirit: 135-143; nourishing our spiritual life: 144-152; developing a spirituality of mission: 153; forming ourselves in the basics of the spiritual life: 154-159; growing in spiritual maturity as we await the coming of Christ: 160-163; spiritual formation and human formation: 164; consecrating our mind to God and seeking wisdom, a gift of the Holy Spirit: 200-203; following Christ and responding to his call: 221-225; welcoming the gift of community life: 259; communing with the heart of Christ the apostle: 295-298; passing on to others what we have contemplated: 302-310; humble daily faithfulness: 345; times of desert: 348; taking time for a break: 349-351; the danger of acedia: 354; the final Passover: 362.

5. Our place in the world

Formation in the context of today's world: 2, 34; going out to meet the world in mission: 15; challenges for consecrated life in today's world: 38-44; challenges for formation and mission: 45-50; forming ourselves by entering into dialogue with the world of which we are a part: 84; the Spirit denounces the world in us: 140; discerning the Spirit of God and the spirit of the world: 149; renouncing the world: 156 (asceticism), 222 (consecrated life); embracing the world as it is: 161; the influence of our families on our relationship with the world: 186; coming to a mature vision of the world: 196; entering into dialogue with today's world through philosophy: 211; engaging in dialogue between faith and reason: 213; evangelising the world in search of wisdom: 219; being a sign to the world: 228 (the evangelical counsels), 240 (poverty); becoming artisans of God's plan for the world: 288, 292; praying for the world: 297; listening to the cries of the world: 296, 322; withdrawing from the world: 348.

6. Relations between clerical and non-clerical brothers

We do not want to make distinctions of rank: 16; every brother must find his place in the community: 40; readjusting our vision of the priesthood: 43; the need to take into account — : 60; living fraternally with one another: 257-262; living a spirituality of communion: 289; the formation of young priests: 337; the role of the Master of the Temporary Professed in discerning the call to Holy Orders: 443; the formation of non-clerical brothers: 454; the formation of brothers preparing for the priesthood: 455.

7. Reconciling with oneself

Participating in ongoing formation and enabling the charism of the community to unfold: 32; emphasising freedom of conscience: 53; encouraging self-knowledge and the development of skills and proficiency: 58; taking cultures into account: 59; passing from an ideal to reality: 72-75; the role of a spiritual accompanier in self-knowledge: 119; recognising oneself as a sinful and saved creature: 136; setting

out on the path of interiority: 137; moving towards spiritual maturity: 161; learning to know oneself: 165; building healthy self-confidence: 166; love of truth as a condition for working on oneself: 167; growing in personal autonomy: 168; developing skills and proficiency: 171; educating our emotional life: 175; serving others and giving of ourselves: 183; developing right relationships with our families: 186; knowing one's own culture and learning to live interculturally: 187; maintaining a balanced life: 188-191; working towards becoming free: 192; taking responsibility for our actions: 193; learning from experience: 195; coming to a mature vision of man and life: 196; integrating fragility and weakness: 197; working towards a coherent life: 216; self-renunciation in order to follow Christ: 222; giving and keeping our word: 223; giving our whole selves: 233; accepting lack and dependence: 245-247; forming personal autonomy with a view to obedience: 253; reconciling with others: 262; finding one's place in the community: 263-266; acquiring personal skills and proficiency: 343; the joyful experience of spiritual fruitfulness: 345; times of consolidation: 350; times of more intense spiritual combat: 352 *sq*; disappointment and disillusionment in mid-life: 355; trials in the common life: 359.

8. Getting spiritual help

Formation in spiritual accompaniment: 55; putting on the new self: 71-75; entering into dialogue with those who accompany us: 84-a; the role of a spiritual accompanier and confessor in our formation: 95-96; the spiritual accompanier during initial formation: 119; spiritual leadership of the formation community: 124; being accompanied by lay men or women: 131 **§2;** finding support in our spiritual accompanier: 159; integrating fragility and weakness: 197; spiritual accompaniment and the vow of chastity: 232 **§3,** 233; accompanying lack (poverty): 246; developing interior obedience to God: 251; supervision at the apostolic level: 330; supervision for priests: 337 **§3;** getting help in times of trial: 352-357; accompanying older members of the community: 361.

9. Persevering in one's vocation

The support of Mary in remaining faithful: 19; encouraging perseverance: 63; formation as a programme of creative fidelity: 70; a journey of self-giving: 72-74; persevering in one's vocation: 86; the support of the community in our ongoing formation and our faithfulness: 88; serving others and giving of ourselves: 183; responding to Christ's call: 221; self-renunciation in order to follow Christ : 222; giving and keeping our word: 223; listening to the Spirit who shows us the daily path of our consecration: 225; the support of community life in remaining faithful: 268; becoming part of the history of the priory: 278-279; humble daily faithfulness: 344; celebrating faithfulness (jubilees): 346; the witness of faithfulness given by older members of the community: 360.

10. The conventual chapter

— as a constitutive element of our way of life: 28; parrhesia in — : 31 **§3;** the importance of collegiality: 57; the responsibility of — in ongoing formation: 88, Appendix 1-II; community growth: 89, 79; obedience and — : 256; the role of — in building community: 269-271; the role of — in certain key moments in the history of the priory: 279; community discernment in —: 282; apostolic discernment of —: 325-326, 329; the responsibility of — for admissions: 110, 33.

Appendix 2:
SUMMARY TABLE OF THE PRESCRIPTIVE VALUE OF THE PARTS OF THE RATIO

Part One	Chapter 1	This chapter presents the charism as the inspiration and reference point for our formative journey. It goes beyond a normative or restrictive perspective and presents the spirit that animates our vocation.
	Chapter 2	This chapter, which describes the current contexts in which formation is undertaken, does not provide a normative, but rather a contextual perspective. It can be useful for everyone in analysing the influence of current contexts on their own journey and for formators in accompanying young brothers.
	Chapter 3	This chapter is explanatory rather than juridical. It provides fundamental guidelines that put into perspective the recommendations presented in the rest of the RF.
	Chapter 4	This chapter sets out the responsibilities of each brother in the process of ongoing formation. It therefore includes a component that is binding for those concerned.
	Chapter 5	The objectives of formation set out in this chapter are prescriptive for houses of formation, formators, and brothers in initial formation.
	Chapter 6	This chapter, which describes formation, the code of conduct, and cooperation, has a prescriptive value for the formators concerned.
Part Two	Chapters 7-12	Part Two describes "a formation programme inspired by [our] particular charism" (VC 68) and thus sets out in terms of ongoing formation the vocation proper to the Community. As a normative document, it describes the setting in which our ongoing formation takes place in accordance with our charism, highlighting certain aspects that are priorities for formation. As such, it sets out guidelines which, without being legally binding—not having a strictly juridical form—together sketch out the ideal life we are seeking. They are a sure guide that every brother is invited to follow in order to grow in his journey of sanctification. Generally speaking, each heading is followed by a first paragraph that sets out one or more objectives of formation, that is, an aspect that we are called to seek to implement in our lives; the following paragraph acts like a toolbox and recommends ways in which a brother can achieve the desired objective when he wants to go further in that aspect of formation.
Part Three	Chapter 13	This chapter provides guidelines for approaching the different stages of our journey of ongoing formation; it sets out the general spirit in which the key stages of ongoing formation should be approached and provides practical advice on implementing them.
	Chapters 14-17	These chapters, which present the different stages of initial formation, are binding. They define, as a norm, the objectives of each stage of initial formation and the means of achieving them that must be implemented by the brothers in formation and by the formators. Everything in these chapters is binding except for what is explicitly presented as optional.

Appendix 3:
METHOD FOR DRAWING UP THE RATIO FORMATIONIS PROVINCIALIS

I. DRAWING UP THE *RATIO FORMATIONIS PROVINCIALIS*

1. The minimum points to be determined

In accordance with the *Ratio Formationis Congregationis*, the *Rationes Provinciales* must at a minimum:

- Identify the local contexts that influence formation and mission (RF 34);
- Make explicit the aspects of formation specific to the region (RF 6);
- Describe the division of responsibilities specific to the context (FR 6);
- Provide guidelines for drafting the programmes for each house of initial formation (RF 6);
- Set the programme and frequency of formation sessions for priors—the organisation of which is now the responsibility of the province (RF 285);
- After examining the regional contexts and resources, formulate a precise and appropriate itinerary for each stage of the pre-novitiate in accordance with the general indications of the Ratio Congregationis (RF 364);
- Define the structure of vocations promotion best suited to the region (RF 366);
- Set the minimum length of time of observership, in the spirit of PI 29 (RF 373);
- Determine the conditions of the postulancy in accordance with RF 375, in particular the following specific arrangements (RF 386):
    - Whether postulancy is residential or non-residential—and if it is non-residential, the arrangements for formation and the minimum criteria for participation.
    - Any criteria specific to the province for entry to the novitiate—especially as regards the level of formal education required, age limit, etc.
    - The required level of proficiency in the language of the novitiate and the necessary proficiency tests to be passed.
    - The way in which entry to the postulancy is marked, if at all.
    - The composition of the admissions council, the content of the candidature file, and the methodology for discernment.

2. Recommended pathway for preparing the drawing up of the *Ratio Provincialis*

1° Get to grips with the *Ratio Congregationis* and work towards its concrete and effective implementation—in particular by implementing personal and community programmes of formation as well as developing local programmes of formation in the houses of formation.

2° Define *a minima* the points listed in the previous section that need to be decided.

3° If it is possible to go further, identify aspects of the *Ratio Congregations* that need supplementing in the *Ratio Provincialis*:

- Supplement to Chapter 1: Has the province put in place an inculturated expression of the charism that needs to be specified in the Ratio?
- Supplement to Chapter 2: Are there any contexts specific to the province that influence formation and mission?
- Supplement to Chapter 4: Is there a division of responsibility that is specific to the province and should be made explicit? (For example: influence of the family, the home parish, the bishop of the home diocese, etc.).
- Supplement to Chapter 5: Does the province have any additional objectives for initial formation (e.g. language, ethnic relations, etc.)?
- Supplement to Chapter 6: Does the province have its own procedures or requirements regarding the appointment, training, cooperation, or code of conduct of formators (e.g. specific training on abuse, a requirement for all formators to have spent at least 10 years in the province, the involvement of women in formation, etc.)?
- Supplement to chapters 7-12: Does the province have its own specific needs?
    - for spiritual formation (local devotions, local spirituality, superstitions, etc.)?
    - for human formation (the place of the family, elders, women, polygamy, the relationship between the individual subject and the community, etc.)?
    - for intellectual formation (local approaches to life, relationship to intellectual work and study, etc.)?
    - for formation in the vows (relationship to possessions and poverty, to authority, to women, etc.)?
    - for formation in community life
    - for apostolic formation (local pastoral issues, local contexts for ecclesial cooperation, etc.)?
- Supplement to Chapter 13: Does the province offer specific means of accompaniment for the various key moments of ongoing formation?
- Supplement to chapters 14-17: Does the province propose specific pathways for the formation of young brothers?

4° In addition to all that has already been explored, are there any aspects of formation specific to the province that should be included in the *Ratio Provincialis*?

3. Advice for drawing up the *Ratio*

It will be useful to consult all the brothers of the province during the drafting of the *Ratio Formationis Provincialis.*

The Director Provincial of Formation and his advisor will be able to identify the following aspects:

- Characteristics of the cultural, pedagogical, apostolic and ecclesial contexts—also derived from the experiences of ongoing and initial formation.
- Particular apostolic areas of focus that require special attention.
- Cultural points which repeatedly require formation for the brothers, both at the level of the apostolate and witness given and at the level of ongoing religious formation.
- Particular ecclesial contexts—this may also include pastoral guidelines issued by Bishops' Conferences or major superiors (or federations of such conferences at the continental level).
- Persuasive experiences of formators in the various areas of formation.

It should be remembered that the *Ratio Formationis* should not be aimed solely at initial formation, but first and foremost at ongoing formation, and that initial formation should be considered in relation to ongoing formation.

The directives of the *Ratio Provincialis* cannot be opposed to those of the *Ratio Congregationis* or to the general spirit that animates it.

In drawing up the *Ratio Provincialis*, exhortations and explanations should be limited, and preference should be given to a pedagogical perspective, which first sets out the main aims or objectives and then the ways and means of achieving them.

The *Ratio Provincialis* should distinguish between the objectives of ongoing formation and the pathways of progression that mark out stages of growth and enable brothers in initial formation to achieve the objective over time or to become autonomous in the daily pursuit of that objective.

4. Plan of the Ratio Provincialis

For reasons of unity and convenience, the plan of the *Ratio Provincialis* will follow that of the *Ratio Congregationis*, transforming the chapters into sections:

I. General guidelines

1. *The life and expression of the charism in our province*
2. *The context of our provincial formation*
3. *The objectives of formation in our province*
4. *The central people involved in formation*
5. *The objectives of initial formation*
6. *The formators*

II. The dynamics of formation in our province

1. *Spiritual formation*
2. *Human formation*
3. *Intellectual formation*
4. *Formation in the vows*
5. *Community formation*
6. *Apostolic formation*

III. Stages and progression of formation

1. Key moments of ongoing formation

2. Pre-novitiate

a. Pastoral care of vocations

b. Period of observership

c. Postulancy

3. Novitiate

4. Temporary profession

5. First years of perpetual profession

II. EXAMPLE OF A LOCAL PLAN OF FORMATION

RF 128: "**§1.** Based on this *Ratio Formationis Congregationis* and in accordance with its *Ratio Provincialis*, each house of formation should draw up a "local plan of formation," which will present the elements of local pedagogy, the structures and dynamics of organisation and cooperation specific to that setting, as well as specific activities and classes (*cf.* RFIS 10). The Congregation will provide an outline to help facilitate its preparation.

§2. A written customary should also be drawn up which sets out the house rules and the concrete procedures that affect the brothers in initial formation.

§3. These two texts—which can be combined into a single document—will be communicated to the formators and to the brothers in formation. They will be ratified by the Director Provincial of Formation after consulting with the Director General of Formation."

1. Proposed outline for a local plan of formation

- **1)** Description of the mission of the house (provincial or general house of formation, novitiate, house of professed brothers studying philosophy or theology, etc.).
- **2)** If it is a general or interprovincial house of formation: Definition of how to take into account the different *rationes provinciales* and how to cooperate with the Priors Provincial, the Directors Provincial of Formation, the Novice Masters (of novices or of temporary professed) of the province, etc.
- **3)** If the house is both an apostolic priory and a place of formation: Definition of the different functions of the two entities and the boundaries between them.
- **4)** Relationship between young brothers and formators (Who has what responsibility? Who should be approached in which field?).
- **5)** Composition and operation of the team of formators.
- **6)** Composition and operation of the council of formators.
- **7)** Relationship between the council of formators and the council of the house.
- **8)** Template for reports on brothers (subjects to be covered) and which reports are to be drawn up.

- **9)** What are the values of the Community (the whole community in that place) and how do all the brothers participate together in creating a favourable climate for formation?
- **10)** How do the formators plan to implement the programme of formation defined by the Ratio Congregationis and the *Ratio Provincialis* for the stage of formation concerned?
- **11)** What is the recourse procedure if something is not working out for a brother in formation or a formator?
- **12)** The rules of confidentiality.
- **13)** What human, spiritual, apostolic, and formation activities are put in place? How do they fit into the overall pedagogy of formation for this stage?
- **14)** How do the daily and weekly timetables and the annual programme contribute to the pedagogy of formation?
- **15)** The manner of living in common (in teams, in community, etc.) and how it aids the local programme of formation.
- **16)** Who are the people outside the community—confessors, professionals, doctors, psychotherapists, etc.—whom the brothers can contact to talk?

2. The customary of the house of formation

As with every convent, a customary must specify the timetable, duties, responsibilities, and mode of operation within the house of formation. It must be concise, in writing, and updated every year.

Appendix 4:
DEVISING PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANS OF FORMATION

I. DEVISING A PERSONAL PLAN OF FORMATION

RF 85 §2: "Every perpetually professed brother is invited, in conjunction with the Director Provincial of Formation, to establish a personal plan of formation. This will aim to meet his personal needs (life balance, renewal of his consecrated life, a deepening of various other aspects) and community needs (apostolic missions, responsibilities in the priory, etc.). The Director Provincial of Formation should introduce a personal formation booklet that will help brothers by providing an overview of formation already received, qualifications acquired, skills developed, and plans for future formation, etc."

The following table should help brothers to set up an annual programme of formation. The programme can also cover several years, but it should be reassessed at least once a year.

Year(s):	####
Analysis of my needs	
Needs in spiritual formation	E.g.: deepen asceticism, set up better spiritual accompaniment, spiritual reading, etc.
Needs in human formation	E.g. gain self-confidence, learn to work with others, develop a balanced life.
Needs in intellectual formation	E.g. reflect on euthanasia and bioethical laws, discover the major figures in African philosophy, the theology of the Eucharist (real presence and liturgical action), the role of charisms in the Christian community, etc.
Needs in formation in the vows	E.g. improve the way I cooperate with my prior, invest less in relationships so that I can be more available to God, etc.
Needs in community formation	E.g. improve the quality of discussions in chapter, put more into my services, etc.
Needs in apostolic formation	E.g. learn how to cooperate with the parish priest of the neighbouring parish, who is very difficult, learn how to hear the confessions of the children at the primary school, etc.
Other	Enter here any formation needs that come to mind and do not fit into the boxes above.
Formation opportunities	
Opportunities for formation from the province or the Congregation	Name the proposed sessions
Opportunities for formation from the diocese	Find out about and register for formation courses that relate to your needs
Other opportunities	Enter reading material, activities, people to meet or contact, etc. here.

Priorities for the year	
Priority 1	Choose a priority in formation for the year. Do not hesitate to ask your brothers, prior, or spiritual accompanier for advice.
Corresponding means of achieving the priority	Identify the appropriate means: activity, seminar, reading list, discussion with someone, meeting up with an expert in the relevant field, work to undertake on the interior life, etc. Do not hesitate to ask the Director Provincial of Formation for help.
Priority 2	If needs be, choose a second or third priority depending on the scale of the work to be carried out and the (realistic) possibility of undertaking it at the same time.
Corresponding means of achieving the priority	
Subject(s) for personal study	Note here the areas you would like to explore in your study this year: this could be in the field of philosophy or theology, in pastoral, liturgical, sociological, or historical subjects, or related to skills you would like to develop (virtues, technical skills, etc.).
End-of-year assessment	
Assessment	Carry out an end-of-year assessment. What have you z? Did it match your objectives? Are you satisfied? What do you need to keep going further? (Repeat this evaluation every year if the project extends over several years).
Plans / lessons learned for next year	Do you already have ideas for next year? Has this year's journey taught you anything about yourself, the way you learn, and the best means of moving forward?

This table is just one way of setting up a personal programme of formation. Every brother can find the method that suits him best. However, it is necessary to put your plans in writing to make them concrete and verifiable. It is important to set objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T. objectives).

II. DRAWING UP A PRIORY'S PROGRAMME OF FORMATION

RFC 90: "It is up to the conventual chapter to take responsibility for the formation of the local community. Thus, within the framework given by the Ratio Formationis Congregationis and the Ratio Provincialis and taking into account the complimentary formation programmes established by the province and the Congregation, each conventual chapter must establish a programme of formation specific to the priory. This programme (of one year or more) must enable the priory to engage in a particular direction and with means that correspond to its specific mission, to the needs of the priory, and to the aspirations of the brothers. At a minimum, it should define the objective of community intellectual work and how it is to be organised."

The following table may be useful when drawing up a local programme of formation in the conventual chapter:

Year:	####	
Analysis of formation needs in the priory		
Formation needs	Spiritual	What do we need to support the spiritual life of the convent? Are there elements of the spiritual life with which we are not familiar and which we would like to explore together? Are there some fundamentals of the spiritual life that we need to revisit?
	Human	Are there any aspects of human formation that we would all like to work on together? Are there areas of human immaturity in our priory that should be corrected? What can we do to be a happier, more balanced community?
	Intellectual	Are there fundamental themes or subjects concerning our life or mission that we would like to develop or should develop? Are there any recurring or new ideas that we have heard about in our surroundings that are worth reflecting on? Are there aspects of our intellectual stance that we should correct?
	Religious	Do we need to deepen certain theoretical aspects or correct certain practices in the areas of chastity, poverty, and obedience?
	Community	Are there elements of our common life that we should be looking at in greater depth? What are the joys and difficulties in our common life?
	Apostolic	How do we live a spirituality of apostolate? What do we need in order to be better invested in our apostolate at the service of the Church through the deployment of the Congregation's charism?
Needs linked to our apostolate		Is there a need for formation to fulfil our apostolic life (topical subjects on which to reflect in order to respond to people, a theme to work on during a seminar or a day session)? Have we encountered an apparent dead end in a situation that requires community reflection, growth, and formation?
Opportunities for formation from the province or the Congregation		Note down suggestions here.
Decision of the chapter		
Priority 1:		From the needs listed above, choose one that will be the priority for this year.
Corresponding means of achieving the priority:		Define the means that will be used to make progress in this community objective: sessions of community intellectual work devoted to the subject, meetings with people invited to share their opinions, meetings with experts, readings in the refectory, passages from the RF to work on, conventual chapters devoted to the subject, fraternal community get-together, renewed community discipline on a specific point, etc. Remember to make a note straight away of who will do what.
Priority 2:		If you feel that a second or third priority is useful and achievable, you can note it here along with the corresponding means of achieving it. Make sure you remain realistic.
Corresponding means of achieving the priority:		
Community intellectual work		Note here the dates and topics covered in community intellectual work. Do this whether the topic is related to the priority or is an independent theme.

End-of-year assessment	
Assessment:	At the end of the year, the programme of formation should be assessed: What has actually been achieved compared to what was planned? Were there any additional initiatives during the year? Did we achieve our objective? Are we satisfied? What do we need to move forward?
Plans for next year:	At the end of the year, you can collect ideas for areas of formation to work on the following year, which will be chosen at the conventual chapter at the beginning of the year.

Appendix 5:
PROGRAMME OF FORMATION IN INTERCULTURALITY

I. ONGOING FORMATION

1. Culture and consecrated life

"The word 'culture' in its general sense, according to the pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes, can indicate 'all those factors by which man refines and unfolds the manifold spiritual and physical qualities that enable him to master his condition and his destiny' (GS II, ch. II, nn. 53-62). [...] There consequently exists an affinity between the religious life and culture. Concretely, this affinity calls our attention to certain points. Jesus Christ and his Gospel transcend all cultures, even if they are entirely penetrated by the presence of the risen Christ and of his Spirit. On the other hand, every culture should be evangelized, that is to say, purified and healed of the wounds of sin. At the same time the wisdom which it contains has been surpassed, enriched, and perfected by the wisdom of the Cross" (PI 90-91).

In the context of our apostolic consecrated life, culture refers first and foremost to the "soil" from which each of the brothers come: their family and social environment, values, customs, language, way of understanding the human person and the world, way of expressing themselves and relating to others, the arts. In this sense, culture is an essential part of what each brother "brings" with him and consecrates to the Lord by responding to his call. Culture also refers to the "soil" in which we are planted in order to bear fruit in our apostolic mission: whether we are sent to a distant country or to our country of origin, our mission is always made incarnate in a particular setting and aims to bring about an encounter between the Gospel and people who also have their own cultures.[192]

Culture, however, is not limited to the particular features of national or ethnic culture; it also includes the culture of one's family, social environment, workplace, etc. As a consequence, our life as Brothers of Saint John will always be essentially "intercultural," because it always involves the coming together of people living the same vocation but originating from different cultures.

From a community standpoint, we therefore seek to form a common culture, whose essential values are those of the Gospel and of our charism, the centre of which is the Lord Jesus Christ, and in which each brother will joyfully live out his calling, enriching this common culture with his own culture.

Globalisation, which allows different cultures to enrich each other, also brings with it a globalisation of culture, which sometimes leads to a blurring of traditional points of reference. Our cultural education must take account of this global culture, with its richness and its limitations.

192. *Cf.* EG 115: "The human person is always situated in a culture: "nature and culture are intimately linked". Grace supposes culture, and God's gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it."

2. Pedagogy of formation in the field of culture

Culture interacts with all aspects of formation. Taking this into account in formation presents some profound challenges.

a) Knowing one's own culture and taking an interest in the culture of others

The first aspect of formation to put in place is to learn about one's own culture and to take an interest in the culture of others. It is important to remember that culture is not just a set of visible things. It has a large invisible and often unconscious component (feelings and emotions, inner attitudes, understanding of reality, interpretations, etc.), which form the submerged part of the iceberg.[193]

If human formation "is intended to educate the person in the truth of his being",[194] then that includes his cultural dimension in its various aspects (national, family, etc.). Discovering one's own culture is a necessary aspect of self-knowledge. Throughout our lives, we need to deepen our self-knowledge and our knowledge of our culture. Daily obedience to God, listening to his call, and making the Congregation's charism our own all involve working on ourselves by elevating and purifying everything that belongs to our culture.[195]

The discovery of our own culture and encountering the culture of others go hand in hand: coming face to face with other cultures enables us to become aware of many of the elements that characterise us[196]; conversely, knowing who we are allows us to go out and truly meet others.

In his book *Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore details six fundamental values, the poles of which characterise different cultures. Each culture places its values at varied distances from the middle point between two extremes in each of the six values. These values have a determining impact on the way in which each brother will live the essential elements of our consecrated life and mission. This table, given as an example, can help us to situate our own culture in comparison with that of others, or to identify what characterises a culture we encounter in relation to our own.

193. "Getting to know a culture is very difficult. To illustrate this difficulty, it is compared to an iceberg of which we can only see the protruding surface, i.e. 10%, while 90% is below water. In the same way, the material elements of each culture (like clothes and typical foods, traditional artifacts, dances, etc.) constitute only the 10% that we can see, feel, hear, smell and name with ease. In the remaining 90%, which corresponds to the immaterial elements, we can distinguish in turn 3 levels: the first, partially visible, level to which we can access when we seek it intentionally (what is behind the language, communication styles, leadership, conflict resolution, etc.) ; the second level (one of the central values) is much more difficult to reach and examine; and the third level (that of the basic suppositions) is so deep and unconscious that we cannot really get to know it: this is what we take as "normal," "given" (Sister Adriana Carla Milmanda, *Intercultural life* as *a sign of prophetic hope. Conference at the International Union of Superiors General*, 8 May 2019).
194. RFIS 63; see PDV 38.73 and VC 91.
195. *Cf.* VN 38: "Cultural diversities force a double path for taking roots in a specific cultural being, as well as the ability to transcend limits of an ever-wider evangelical scope. With religious profession, the consecrated person chooses to meditate between their own specific cultural inscription and their aspirations towards an envangelical life, which inevitably widens their horizons and enhances their sensibility. It is becoming ever more urgent to explore this function of mediation without it being subjected to the particularisms of cultural diversity."
196. "Only in contact with the 'other,' with what is 'different' do we begin to know our own culture and that of others... this knowledge is, then, given by comparison with the 'others,' those who are 'outside' our group. This division between 'us' (women, Catholics, religious, professionals, Latin Americans, Argentines, southern, northern, etc.) and 'them' (those who are not like 'us') protects us and gives us a sense of identity and belonging, but it also isolates us, challenges us, and fills us with fear in the face of the 'unknown.' There are no higher or more developed cultures and less developed or inferior cultures, but different cultures. And each culture believes that it is the best because it is the best form that has allowed its group to adapt to the context in which it developed" (Sister Adriana Carla Milmanda, *Intercultural life, a sign of prophetic hope. Conference at the International Union of Superiors General, 8 May 2019*).

Cultural value	IDENTITY (I / WE) *How is personal identity defined?* *Is it defined in relation to individual or group characteristics?*	
Description	Individualistic cultures	Collective cultures
	Importance of "I" / independence from family / favours decisions taken alone	Strong sense of belonging to family, group, ethnic group, etc. / decisions often taken jointly
Cultural value	HIERARCHY *How does the structure express (if at all) differences in authority, position, and power?*	
Description	"Flat" structure with little hierarchy	More vertical structure—expresses relations of authority
	Emphasis on the equality of individuals	Different tasks depending on the degree of power
	Authority can be questioned / discussed	The views of those in authority are accepted and rarely questioned
Cultural value	RISK *To what extent does a culture tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity?* *How important are rules and control?*	
Description	Flexible or "loose"	More controlled and restrictive
	Few rules, few guidelines	Written rules are important.
	High tolerance of the unexpected and the informal	We avoid the unexpected as much as possible. We categorise and anticipate.
Cultural value	TIME *How do we relate to time and planning?* *How do we envisage the future: in the short term or the long term?*	
Description	Short term	Long term
	Prefer quick results	Choose to persevere and wait for the right moment
	We consider the present or the recent past	It does not matter if results are slow in coming
Cultural value	COMMUNICATION *How do we express ourselves? Which mode: direct or indirect?*	
Description	Context is of little importance	Context is very important
	Direct communication, explicit language	Implicit, non-verbal, and indirect communication dominate
Cultural value	ACHIEVEMENT *What importance do we place on action (doing)?* *How do being, life, relationships, and action relate to one another?*	
Description	Being	Action (Doing)
	Favours reflection and time spent together	Encourages action and proactive behaviour
	Likes quality of life above all else	Promotes results and efficiency

b. Learning to live together interculturally

Our common fraternal life involves a way of behaving, speaking, and listening to one another: an "incarnation." Without dreaming of a fraternal life free of conflict and wounds, every brother must learn to consider the culture of the other members of his priory as a richness that adds to the community, and to be receptive to the culture of others while offering the rich qualities of his own culture of origin.

In community life and beyond, the meeting of cultures requires effort that can be described in terms of three concepts: starting from the basis of *multiculturalism*, an effort of *transculturalism* is needed to achieve true *interculturalism*.

- a) *Multiculturalism* is a fact of life and the starting point of a community: that of the meeting or living together of individuals from different cultures—an underground train or metro is multicultural, as is a Sunday congregation. This reality is present in every religious community, whether because of differences in age, countries of origin, or social backgrounds.
- b) *Transculturalism* is the process of changing culture (entering religious life, changing priories, welcoming new brothers, being sent to a foreign country). It includes moments of culture shock, rejection, or fusion, and therefore requires accompaniment adapted to the situation, which needs a certain amount of skill. This process takes time and involves all the dimensions of the person: it is generally estimated that it takes at least three years to go through this transcultural process.
- c) *Interculturalism* is the goal sought after. It is the result of a process that involves the mutual communication of gifts, knowledge of oneself and of the other, a deliberate choice by each of the community members, and the perseverance to implement that choice. Building an "intercultural" community is a positive choice, an "intentional option"[197]; it cannot be a constraint, or an effect accepted as more or less inconvenient "conditioning." Living together requires a long-term effort to understand and integrate cultural implications into our communication, liturgy, relaxation, conventual chapters, and all the realities we share. The sharing of our gifts experienced in truth produces a "new culture" for the community, the priory, the parish—a culture made up of the contribution of each member, who does not leave behind his own culture of origin.

Implementing interculturality requires great humility and a willingness to move forward on a path of conversion. It also requires the acquisition of certain fundamental skills:

- The ability to communicate appropriately and effectively with people and groups from other cultures, and also to accept ambiguity.
- The ability to adapt our behaviour and mode of communication when interacting with people from other cultures.
- The ability to recognise the sources of intercultural conflict and undertake to resolve them.
- The ability to evolve in our opinions and judgements through encounters with people who are different from ourselves.

As consecrated persons, we are convinced that the Gospel and the charism of the Congregation have values that do not belong to any one culture and that are at the heart of the communion and common culture that the brothers are seeking to build. This certainty is the foundation of our ability to live together in an intercultural context.

---

197. "[L]iving interculturally is a vocation and a counter-cultural option, and that, as such, it appeals to the faith and to the life of grace. Humanly, we all tend to seek and interact with those with whom we feel identified and, therefore, understood, included, accepted. Conversely, what is "different" tends to scare us, challenge us, and make us distrustful. This distrust, especially for cultures that suffered the experience of the colonization or the invasion of their nations, is not unjustified or minor ; on the contrary, it is a collective wound that lasts for generations and must be healed personally before engaging in a project of intercultural life and mission. Intercultural life is not automatically the result of the mere coexistence of people of different cultures ; on the contrary, it must be intentionally constructed and assumed as a process of personal and community conversion" (Sister Adriana Carla Milmanda, *Intercultural life, a sign of prophetic hope. Conference at the International Union of Superiors General, 8 May 2019*).

c) Recognising God's action in culture and undertaking evangelical discernment

Cultural formation affects our very relationship with God and our acceptance of God's guidance over every culture. Every brother must learn to discern and embrace the work of the Holy Spirit in the cultures he encounters. The Church recognises the diversity of human cultures as a manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. Throughout formation, the means of spiritual discernment will help the brother to discover this action of the Spirit in himself, in his brothers, and in the culture around him. This will also enable him to position himself appropriately with respect to others and to develop relevant apostolic projects.

d) Engaging in mission in a culturally sensitive way

As apostles, we must learn to adapt to the cultures of those we meet. Allowing ourselves to be changed by our encounters with others is an integral part of our pastoral conversion. In formation, we must all be mindful that mission in today's world no longer follows a model where the evangeliser starts from the "centre" and goes "ad gentes"; rather, mission is "inter-gentes," by which we mean that it involves multiple discussions and interactions, and the effects of digital culture play a big part in this.

Being sent to another country or learning another language are experiences that foster maturity on a human and spiritual level for many brothers. They are also times of trial, when the brother goes through the phases of "transcultural" change. The work of transculturalism allows the brother to put down roots in the environment to which he is sent. It also allows him to "decentre," which is an invaluable help in putting his own culture into perspective and being ready to receive the new culture he encounters. Being sent to another country, another continent, or another language is demanding. Before sending a brother, it is important to sound out his personal desire, his tolerance of difference, and his capacity to integrate new things and to learn another language.

In order to provide sufficient accompaniment for the brothers before and during their assignment to a distant country, the provinces must put in place the necessary tools and practical formation. It is important to give brothers the time they need to undertake such formation.

e) In dialogue with culture

Our intellectual formation will be enriched if it enters into dialogue with the process of formation in interculturality. Whether at the beginning of formation or after years of religious life, the ability to question one's own culture, values, and convictions through encounters with others is a concrete sign of intellectual vitality.

Every culture expresses its aspirations and questions in a unique way—from its values to its artistic, religious, and intellectual modes of expression—and our formation must take these into account and value them. By listening to different cultures, we can achieve a genuine encounter with the human person. Taking cultures into account contributes to the search for philosophical wisdom and enriches our theological understanding.

3. Key moments

a) The first year of assignment

The first year of assignment after the end of initial formation can be a challenging time. The place culture takes will be more or less pronounced depending on the circumstances; nevertheless, encountering a new place and a new priory will involve a significant transcultural process that needs to be accompanied. The prior will make an assessment during this period of the positive

or negative impact of the cultural change on the brother's mental and physical health, as well as his fraternal and apostolic participation. Care will also be taken to accompany the newly assigned brother in his discovery of the local context and culture, and to give him the time he needs to learn the language, if necessary.[198]

b) Change of assignment

A change of assignment is also an opportunity for significant transcultural work. The same characteristics apply as when a brother changes priory or is given his first assignment. When the new assignment also involves a change of country and language, particular attention should be paid to making the most of what has been acquired in the brother's previous experience to support the new move. The local community will try to help the newly assigned brother move through any culture shock in a positive way and make it a place of spiritual growth. If needed, the brother can call on a qualified person from outside the priory to accompany the transcultural process.

c) A gradual stepping back from activity

Older brothers who have to take a step back because of their age can play a significant role in accompanying younger brothers. Their missionary experience is a richness to be passed on to the following generations and has often enabled them to acquire valuable skill for the formation of younger brothers in interculturality; we should willingly call on their acquired wisdom when it can help our local communities.

II. RECOMMENDED PROGRAMME OF INITIAL FORMATION

Work related to culture and interculturality must begin at the stage of postulancy. Concrete means of undertaking this work must be put in place and formators will require practical, experiential knowledge of the culture of the candidates.

1. Postulancy

Objectives	▪ Knowledge on the part of the candidate of his national, ethnic, and family culture; the positive values of his culture. ▪ Start to consider the richness and limitations of his own culture. ▪ If the novitiate will take place in a country other than the country of origin, prepare the transition by forming the candidate in the basics of transcultural change. ▪ Learn the language of the place of novitiate (if applicable).
Means of achieving objectives	▪ Work with the Postulant Director and qualified formators on the brother's family culture and knowledge of his culture of origin. ▪ Formation in listening, including an introduction to the different modes of communication between cultures. ▪ Language classes.

198. For details of the recommended ways of accompanying these stages, see chapter 13, nos 336, 339, and 361.

Signs of growth	▪ The brother is able to identify some of the richness and shortcomings of his culture. ▪ The brother is able to communicate sufficiently in the language of the novitiate. ▪ The brother is interested in learning a second language.

2. Novitiate

Objectives	▪ Discover the charism and spiritual heritage that unites all the brothers and that will be the foundation of intercultural fraternal and apostolic life. ▪ Understand how a Gospel life incorporates cultural values. ▪ Distinguish between what comes from a brother's culture and what is specific to religious life. ▪ Identify the ways in which a brother's culture of origin forms his understanding of human relationships, sexuality, and authority.
Means of achieving objectives	▪ Experience life as a Brother of Saint John and become aware of the diversity of ways in which the charism is embodied in different priories. ▪ Ask the novice to recount the history of his country's evangelisation and to talk about faith in his culture of origin. ▪ Organise a time of cultural sharing among the novices during which each novice can present a few salient features of their culture of origin (food, geography, history, etc.). ▪ Organise a time of sharing between brothers and formators on the way certain fundamental values are lived in their culture of origin (for example: how to say hello, gestures of respect, sense of family, sexuality, authority, etc.). ▪ Give the novice the opportunity to discover, from time to time, the expression of faith in a parish in the country of the novitiate.
Signs of growth	▪ The brother is able to talk about the daily customs of his culture of origin. ▪ The brother knows how to identify ways of expressing the faith that are different from those of his place of origin.

3. Temporary profession

Objectives	▪ Develop the ability to take an active part in fraternal life. ▪ Formation in listening and the virtues specific to intercultural life: humility, patience and listening, goodwill, forgiveness. ▪ Intellectual formation: develop an interest in the diversity of cultural approaches to mankind in conjunction with philosophical studies. ▪ Introduction to the basics of systemic psychology. ▪ Living interculturality as a choice, not a constraint. ▪ Preparation for placement in an apostolic priory.

Means of achieving objectives	▪ Provide practical teaching on the intercultural virtues, in addition to what is taught in philosophical formation, drawing on the Ratio Formationis. ▪ Seminar on systemic psychology. ▪ Review the transcultural experiences of the common life with the temporary professed brother. Accompany the transcultural process and guide the brother towards a conscious choice of interculturality. ▪ Incorporate intercultural references into philosophy classes (references to authors from different cultures, etc.) ▪ Talk about life in an apostolic priory and the intercultural experience of the apostolate. Have the apostle brothers give their testimony about this.
Signs of growth	▪ The brother is able to cooperate and to live out his daily life with brothers from other cultures. He develops authentic fraternal bonds with brothers of a different nationality or culture. ▪ The brother knows how to listen and reconsider what he thinks. He knows how to adapt without negating himself. He can accept doing things differently from the way he knows how.

4. Apostolic placement

Objectives	▪ Develop the ability to communicate with people from other backgrounds. ▪ A ripening of apostolic zeal that goes beyond cultural boundaries. ▪ Learn to discern the work of the Spirit in personal changes linked to culture.
Means of achieving objectives	▪ Provide mentoring to help the brother discover the local culture and customs. ▪ Encourage meeting local people and experiencing local church life (participation in parish and typical local activities). ▪ Help the brother to review his apostolic experiences and any possible negative cultural influences at play. ▪ Allow the brother to participate in apostolic work so that the older brothers can help him discover the local pastoral issues and learn to think about the apostolate in terms of the people served. ▪ Encourage the temporary professed brother to cooperate with other brothers and with local people or people from other cultures.
Signs of growth	▪ The brother talks about the cultural difficulties he has encountered. ▪ The brother participates in apostolic work aimed at people from a different culture. ▪ The brother can accept certain remarks about a particular cultural trait with a sense of humour.

5. Theological formation

Objectives	▪ Develop knowledge of cultural diversity in the Church and the consecrated life. ▪ Develop an openness to different theological approaches from different cultures. ▪ Develop a practical pastoral approach that takes account of cultural differences. ▪ Discern one's skills and gifts with a view to mission, possibly in a distant country.
Means of achieving objectives	▪ Classes in missiology. ▪ Integrate contributions from other cultures into his theology and pastoral care. ▪ Encourage reading theological writings from a variety of cultural backgrounds ▪ Encourage an experience of other cultures in the liturgy. ▪ Tackle the question of the salvation of non-Christians and the question of other religions in theology.
Signs of growth	▪ In addition to the criteria already met: ▪ The brother is able to calmly take a position in theological and pastoral dialogue without rejecting his own culture or that of others. ▪ The brother is able to see cultural difference as a richness that he can integrate and share. ▪ The brother's desire to evangelise is embodied in a desire to encounter people's culture.

Appendix 6:
PROGRAMME OF FORMATION IN THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

I. ONGOING FORMATION WITH RESPECT TO DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

1. The participation of every brother in formation in digital technology

Every brother who uses digital technology for formation, relaxation, or apostolic work needs to be formed in order to make fruitful use of what it offers. Formation should provide brothers with a basic understanding of digital means and terminology and enable them to develop a balanced and mature use of digital technology, free from excessive attachment and dependence.[199]

a) Integrating the issue of digital technology into a comprehensive vision

Because digital technology is now part of daily life and the field of mission, brothers who are able must familiarise themselves with the digital means of communication and social media,[200] gain an understanding of how they might be used in the apostolate, and learn the basics of digital communication. Our engagement with digital technology—the extent of which must be discerned on an individual basis—must go hand in hand with reflection on the way in which these new means of communication influence our way of life and how we might develop good habits and virtues that enable us to use these means of communication wisely.

Digital culture affects every aspect of our lives and our formation. It is transforming the way we communicate with one another and the way we communicate in our apostolates, the way we live together, the way we find information and have access to a variety of points of view, the way we measure and organise our time, the way we are present in the here and now (dividing our attention between the world around us and the virtual, connected world), the way we experience solitude and silence, the way we see ourselves, and so on.

Our inevitable participation in digital technology therefore requires the foundations of a solid human and spiritual formation as well as a deeply rooted consecrated life. Lucidity and discernment are the two fundamental elements that enable each of us to maintain a balanced use of digital technology, without allowing ourselves to be overcome by it. The integration of digital technology into our lives involves major challenges that every brother is called to take up; using digital means of communication, the internet, or social media brings with it the danger of a loss of interiority, the development of various addictions, a headlong rush into digital technology, etc. It is important that every brother is able to autonomously regulate the place of digital technology in his religious life and develop proper management of his time (prayer, fraternity, work, digital technology, rest, etc.). It is

199. RFIS 182.
200. Translator's note: "Social media" is a blanket term that includes social networks.

only to the extent that we ourselves are capable of using the internet wisely that we will be able to support the people who come to us for help on this subject.

To go further in this aspect, a brother must therefore:

- Work to develop a clear understanding of the impact of digital technology (access to the internet and social media) on their religious life, the balance of their human life, and their spiritual life.
- Make his relationship with digital technology something he reviews and discusses with his spiritual accompanier, prior, and brothers.
- Integrate digital technology into his consecrated life and submit to obedience in this area.
- Reflect on the benefits and challenges of digital technology for the consecrated life, daily life, study, and the apostolate, and be aware of the Church's teaching on this subject.
- Learn to use digital tools wisely and develop temperance in this area by setting himself a framework and requirements for their use.

When a brother or those around him notice that he is developing an addiction (games, news, unregulated relaxation, pornography, checking his devices and chatting at any time and in any place, etc.), the brother must take steps to regain a balance compatible with his consecration and, if necessary, seek outside professional help.

c) Digital technology and mission

Because our principal mission is human and Christian formation, and because this is based on communicating and transmitting something to others, every brother must reflect on the appropriate way of using digital tools in his apostolate. He must also learn how to communicate the message he wants to convey in an appropriate way. Preaching and teaching frequently take on a digital form today. These methods of communication have their own norms.

A brother who wants to preach or teach on the internet must therefore learn to:

- Check the quality of the content he wants to communicate.
- Make his message attractive by taking into account current frameworks and methods.
- Stay up to date with what is going on digitally and with online evangelisation.
- Keep abreast of developments in digital technology.
- Make good use of social media, which are constantly evolving.
- Discern the ethical validity of the means of communication used and their impact on people.

In addition to verifying his ability to integrate digital technology in a balanced way into his consecrated life, a brother whose missionary work on the internet or social media becomes a significant part of what he does must ensure that he is truly sent on this mission by the Congregation. It is down to the Congregation to offer particular brothers more advanced and specialised training in digital technology, social communication, and evangelisation. As a general rule, missions in the digital world are to be carried out by at least two brothers working together; leaving one brother alone in this work must be avoided.

d) Digital technology as a means of formation

The development of the internet and social communications opens up tremendous possibilities for formation: access to online formation and resources, forums for discussion and reflection, specialist websites, etc. Every brother should at a minimum be familiar with the online resources offered on

the Congregation's extranet. Subscribing to certain physical or virtual libraries gives access to online books and journals, or to the resources of specialist sites, which are a considerable resource for study.

The use of online resources must go hand in hand with the development of a critical eye that enables us to identify the reliability and scientific quality of the documents consulted. Every province must ensure that formation enables the brothers to make this kind of discernment.

e) Digital etiquette

Because social media and the different platforms for people to express themselves on the internet create new agoras, it is important that every brother who participates in them learns to develop continuity between his life as a consecrated religious and his online behaviour. This involves, in particular, learning digital etiquette (uprightness in this new type of online relationship: posts, videos, chats, discussions, forums, etc.) and discretion in his use of digital technology that respects the framework of the common life (switching off his mobile phone during meals and when reciting the office, being available to the brother who is present before him over and above an apostolic relationship by phone, not having conversations on the phone in the corridors or common areas, etc.).

In line with this, the brothers are required to respect the social media charter ratified by the Council of the Prior General in 2017:

Social media charter (CPG 2017)

Brothers who have a presence on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) are asked to:

- Understand that through their activity on Facebook, they are representing their entire community and the witness it wishes to give.
- Use social media for apostolic purposes.
- Monitor their account, notifications, comments, and photo identifications to make sure they are always giving a positive witness.
- Not accept as friends people who may cause scandal.
- Not publish or share posts of a political, degrading, or vulgar nature.
- Ensure that the witness they give is not of a brother who wastes time on social media or who is preoccupied with his image.
- Accept the comments and advice of their brothers and help their brothers in this area.

To develop such digital etiquette, it is recommended that several brothers work together on activities involving social media so that they can give each other feedback on what is published. In all our online endeavours we must willingly seek help from people outside of the community to evaluate the content we put online and our methods of communication.

f) Criteria for growth

The following criteria can be used by each brother to evaluate his use of digital technology, or by the prior to help a brother:

- The brother is able to express how he is using digital technology for formation and evangelisation, as well as any positive or negative impact it is having. The brother is able to ask for help if appropriate.
- The brother is willing to share his experiences (tools, innovations, links, applications, etc.), for example on the extranet.
- The brother regulates his time spent on the internet well.

- The brother is capable of "disconnecting" at times, for example, when other people are present, during times of desert, in the evening at a reasonable hour.
- The brother communicates well online, in an appropriate and attractive way; the brother "preaches well."

2. Community involvement

The Congregation and the provinces will play an important role in the development of a balanced use of the internet. It is their task to:

- Offer follow up formation in communication to ensure brothers are up to date (refresher courses in homiletics and media communications, etc.).
- Raise awareness of the impact of online purchases (material goods, programmes, books, etc.) on our chosen poverty. Provide keys to integrating an attention to poverty in what we do.
- Stimulate interest (with a view to personal formation and apostolic life) in reflection on the philosophy of technology, Christian anthropology and transhumanism, and the Church's teaching on social communications.
- Propose a path of accompaniment and healing, aware that the freedom given may entail falls and mistakes, that redemption is a normal part of this path, and that the path is a learning process and complex.
- Organise regular sharing groups on how each of us lives with digital technology, where we can seek advice and be challenged by our brothers.
- Define a community ethic for the use of digital technology and add to it regularly as new issues arise.
- Not entrust a mission relating to digital technology to a lone brother.
- Clarify the responsibilities of superiors and formators, the limits of their responsibilities, and the need to involve third parties.

To develop this, we recommend that the Congregation and the province:

- Offer formation in digital evangelisation to brothers who desire it.
- Remind brothers of the social media charter and recommend self-assessment in view of its criteria.
- Reiterate the importance of embodying poverty in the field of digital and online shopping.
- Organise specific formation every so often to keep brothers aware of and up to date on the challenges of digital technology, online evangelisation, digital resources, the philosophy of technology, Christian anthropology and transhumanism, the Church's teaching on social communication, etc.
- Offer refresher courses in communication skills and homiletics.
- Indicate the procedures or contacts for technological assistance in case of need.
- Indicate the procedures or contacts for psychological help in case of need.
- Create a directory of the Congregation's work, mandated tasks, and skills in digital technology.

II. RECOMMENDED PATHWAY FOR INITIAL FORMATION

"Considering the ample attention given by the Magisterium to the theme of social communications, and the promising area of evangelisation found in the 'new media', [programmes of formation] must develop a specific awareness [during initial formation] in this regard."[201] This section proposes a pedagogical pathway to help the formation of young brothers on this tricky subject.

1. Before entry: for example, during postulancy

Objectives	▪ Encourage a balanced use of digital technology during the period of postulancy by developing a balanced relationship with digital technology in everyday life. ▪ Prepare to withdraw from digital technology during the novitiate. ▪ Assess with the candidate his current relationship with digital technology.
Means of achieving objectives	▪ Assess with the candidate his current relationship with digital technology, including his skills and his difficulties. ▪ Talk about addictions and the candidate's relationship with digital technology in their past and present. ▪ Encourage and check whether a candidate's personal profiles on social media are consistent with entry into religious life. ▪ Present the social media charter to the candidate and encourage him to make his social media profiles consistent with religious life. ▪ Prepare the candidate to put his digital accounts on standby[202] and to withdraw from digital technology during the novitiate. If needed, the candidate can "clean up" his profiles to make them consistent with the consecrated life. ▪ Talk to the candidate about his personal history with digital technology (addictions, practices, etc.).
Signs of growth	▪ An ability to talk about his use of digital technology.

2. During the novitiate

Objectives	▪ Experience partial withdrawal from internet use. ▪ Encourage a contemplative life through silence and a slow, non-technological relationship with reality. ▪ "Purification" of the imagination. ▪ Discover and set down roots in his vocation and interior life.

201. RFIS, 182.
202. Email accounts, social media, etc.

Means of achieving objectives	▪ Implement his withdrawal from the internet while maintaining access to his personal email account, at a frequency indicated by the novice master. ▪ The novice can use the internet to contact his family using the means that suit them best. ▪ No telephone or personal computer. ▪ On entering the novitiate, depending on each individual case, close unnecessary social media accounts. Keep open, if necessary—through a twice-yearly connection, for example—those accounts that will be useful later in religious life or that will be useful in the event of leaving before taking perpetual vows.[203] ▪ As part of human formation and formation in the management of affectivity and sexuality in religious life, address the issue of online pornography and other degrading images and encourage brothers to speak about it if needed. Encourage the novice to be open about these issues, if needed, with his spiritual accompanier, or his authority, or a competent external accompanier.
Signs of growth	▪ Acceptance of detachment from digital technology ▪ An ability to express his experience of withdrawing from digital technology, with its positive and negative impacts.

3. Between temporary profession and apostolic placement

Objectives	▪ (Re-)Learn how to use the internet freely. Become aware of the influence of digital technology on our lives. ▪ Learn to manage the internet and religious life. Learn to measure the impact of digital technology on his contemplative life, personal relationship with Christ, and prayer life. ▪ Discover useful tools on the internet for study and research. ▪ Learn how to make the best use of social media. ▪ Learn, with accompaniment, how to use digital technology in the service of evangelisation and begin to discover the possibilities of the online apostolate. ▪ Find out what the Church asks for in relation to digital technology.

203. For example, in 2022: Linkedin, Facebook, etc.

Means of achieving objectives	▪ Classes on how to use the internet effectively for the purposes of study. Classes on the dangers of relationships on the internet, addictions, and the distortion of personal relationships *via* social media, and how to deal with these addictions if they occur. ▪ Sign the social media charter. ▪ Access to a personal telephone or computer, with corresponding accompaniment; easy access to a sufficient number of open-access computers. ▪ Practical training in time management, particularly time spent on the internet. Manage the dual relationship with reality between the distant online and the present here. ▪ Encourage a voluntary review of personal digital technology practices with the brother's accompanier or with his authority. Organise groups of young brothers to review practices together. ▪ Learn how to use the community intranet. ▪ Offer courses with testimonials from brothers or specialists on the proper use of social media. ▪ Deal with addiction, pornography, how to use digital technology appropriately, and obedience with respect to digital technology. ▪ Offer cooperative experiences in apostolic work and mutual aid in the use of digital technology. ▪ Organise groups to reflect on community ethics relating to the use of the internet. ▪ The year before a brother's placement, or even during the placement, provide formation in the Church's teaching on digital technology and evangelisation. Present the possibilities of online evangelisation.
Signs of growth	▪ An ability to open up about his relationship with, and use of, digital technology, its positive or negative impact on his health, his studies, and his spiritual life, and an ability to ask for advice. ▪ An ability to regulate the time he spends on the internet.

4. During apostolic placement

Objectives	▪ Learn to regulate more autonomously the place of digital communication in the brother's religious life. ▪ Develop "digital temperance." ▪ Learn digital etiquette. ▪ Learn about the possibilities of online evangelisation. ▪ Learn what is being done in terms of communication in the apostolic priory and possibly get involved in cooperation with the brothers.

Means of achieving objectives	▪ Prepare the brothers to manage the new technologies and appoint someone for them (prior, master of the temporary professed in that province, specialist brother, spiritual accompanier) with whom they can specifically discuss the subject of communication technologies and their integration into religious life. Review his use of digital technology and his relationship with it with his mentor. ▪ Sign the social media charter once again. ▪ Personal use of a smartphone and laptop (if needed, discerned with the prior), which will be kept by the brother at the end of his placement for further study. ▪ An online session for all brothers on placement dealing with the impact of being connected all the time on the spiritual life and on human relationships. Learn how to "disconnect" during periods of desert. Practical advice on how to reconcile the use of digital technology with the contemplative life. ▪ Know how to use the internet for the apostolate. ▪ Learn to share in community about the use of digital technology; learn to work with peers on online projects.
Signs of growth	▪ An openness about the negative and positive impacts of digital technology on his health (physical and psychological) and on his religious life and knows how to ask for advice. ▪ Regulates the time he spends on the internet; he is capable of "disconnecting" at times, for example during times of desert, to better foster his contemplative life. ▪ Demonstrates etiquette, courtesy, and respect for others. ▪ An ability to talk with his brothers in an unguarded way about his use of digital technology and to draw support from the community for an appropriate use of the internet.

5. During the years of study after placement

Objectives	▪ Perfect his communication skills, eloquence, and attractive presentation of content. ▪ Keep up to date with online formation resources, the Congregation's online resources, and online study resources. ▪ Develop theological reflection on evangelisation, communication, and digital technology. ▪ Know how to help people find the resources they need to overcome the harmful effects of digital technology on their lives.

Means of achieving objectives	▪ Offer the brother the opportunity to review his experiences of digital technology during his placement with someone competent (brother acting as Director of Communications, an expert, etc.). Discuss the problems encountered, the apostolic opportunities, and the technology used. Offer the opportunity to share experiences under the guidance of an expert brother or a professional. Look at case studies of good communications practice by brothers, priories, or associations. Review management of time spent on the internet. ▪ Allow the brother to keep the personal computer and smartphone used during his placement for use during the rest of his studies. ▪ Help the brothers to set up internet evangelisation projects in small groups. ▪ Set up a directory of useful online resources for academic studies and present it to the brothers. ▪ Get the young brothers to devise a formation course for young people on the ethical use of the internet and how to use it for evangelisation.
Signs of growth	▪ In addition to the criteria already met: ▪ Uses social media in a balanced way that is in keeping with his state of life. ▪ An ability to talk simply to the other student brothers about his use of digital technology. ▪ Knows how to set up small apostolic projects on the internet. ▪ A readiness to share his experience and make it available to others (tools, innovations, links, applications, monitoring, etc.).

GLOSSARY

Accompaniment: The dynamic of a formative relationship, in which a brother who is being led by God and the person who journeys with him seek together confirmation of where God is leading him, the purification of his desires, and the incarnation of his desires in reality and in his personal growth.

Andragogy: Refers to the teaching of adults (as opposed to “pedagogy”: the teaching of children) and is characterised, among other things, by a self-motivated approach to learning.

Charism of the community / personal charism: Charisms are particular gifts that the Spirit distributes as he wills (*cf.* 1 Cor 12:11); Paul declares that “to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:7). Charismatic gifts are “given to individual persons, and can even be shared by others in such ways as to continue in time a precious and effective heritage, serving as a source of a particular spiritual affinity among persons" (John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, n. 24). Just as our community seeks to grow in its awareness of the charism it has received from the Spirit for the good of the Church, so too is every brother called to discover the particular gift the Spirit gives him for the good of the Church.

Configuration: The theme of configuration is essential for formation. Through baptism, we have been configured to Christ; but we must make our lives ever more conformed to his will. The same applies to the consecrated life: we are configured to Christ chaste, poor and obedient, and we must let ourselves be configured to him more and more. This is the work of ongoing formation that keeps us attentive to the Gospel and to God's will.

Desert: The desert represents, first and foremost, a choice to live in adoration, to listen to the word, and to seek the living God in solitude and silence with an exclusive love. It is a witness to the coming of Christ as experienced by the prophets and Saint John the Baptist. It always involves a test of faith, linked to penitence and conversion, as it did for the people of Israel. We regularly take periods of personal or community "desert" in order to enter again into the presence of God and be present to ourselves, and to experience the spirit of the desert.

Discernment: Discernment is a journey of listening to the word of God. In response to the Gospel, which invites us to live in a constant state of seeking, desiring the Spirit of the Lord, discernment helps us to orientate our desires towards what is good.

Dissensus: A neologism formed as the opposite of consensus. Far from being synonymous with discord, dissensus expresses the peaceful existence of diverse and irreducible points of view within the same group, such as a conventual chapter.

Docibility: This is the virtue of discipleship and characterises ongoing formation. It cannot be reduced to docility, a virtue that is primarily receptive; it expresses the attitude of someone who cooperates actively in his learning and makes the effort to continuously learn, without ceasing. In the consecrated life, docibility consists in remaining continually receptive to God's teaching in his word and in the way he leads us through the events and people in our lives.

Heart: God's promise of a new covenant is that of a new heart (Ez 36, 26). To live by the New Covenant, every brother is invited to "[enter] into his own heart; God, Who probes the heart, awaits him there" (GS 14). For us, the heart is not only "the seat of moral personality" (CCC 2517); it is above all that inner place that only God knows (1Sm 16, 7; Mt 6, 6).

Integration: The process by which a brother incorporates an element of his life into the unity of his person. Integration aims at bringing unity to the brother’s existence, a state in which his whole being—all that he is—finds its place in the New Creation in Christ.

Internal forum / external forum: The current Code of Canon Law divides the exercise of the power of government into the external forum and the internal forum (Can. 130). In the external forum, the Church exercises the power of government to bring about the common good and it orders the social relations of the faithful. In the external forum, the power of government has juridical effects in the public sphere. Consequently, everything that concerns discipline, order, and social relations between the faithful and between the faithful and the different authorities of the Church, belongs to the external forum. The internal forum is the realm of our inner conscience, which the candidate freely and consciously shares with his spiritual accompanier, not so that the latter can decide his vocation for him, but with the intention of better understanding what God is asking of him. Everything that concerns someone's inner conscience and is closely linked to their relationship with God belongs to the internal forum.

Maturity: Christian maturity is the realisation of the fullness of Christ, the "Perfect Man" (Eph 4:13), in each person and in the Church. This realisation, brought about in faith in God's plan, entails coming to the truth about ourselves, integrating our strengths and weaknesses, and integrating our relationship with others, so that we can then freely move forward in the consecration of our lives.

Multicultural / intercultural: *Inculturation* refers to the effort we make to understand and take on board the way of living and thinking of the culture in which we live, according to the logic of the Incarnation. Extensive inculturation goes hand in hand with evangelical discernment about one's own culture and the culture of others. *Multiculturality* (or *multiculturalism*) indicates the state of a community made up of people from different cultural backgrounds, where each person is welcomed and tolerated along with their culture. Interculturality (or interculturalism) expresses the acceptance of culture in such a way that we allow ourselves to be transformed in order to form a new evangelical culture with others.

Priory's vision: Work carried out by the conventual chapter, sometimes with the help of someone external to the priory, to visualise the options and objectives for the community life and mission of the priory over the coming years. It can sometimes be summarised in a phrase or watchword.

Process: A dynamic of formation by which a series of ordered activities leads to an expected result. Since a brother's formation is primarily practical, a formative process is first and foremost an existential path to be offered rather than a teaching to be given.

Systemic: Systemic psychology considers phenomena as a complex whole and focuses on the multiple relationships between the various individuals of a group in their interactions with one another.

Unification: Pedagogical processes must lead the person to unity in life. The unification of our person is the fruit of a personal effort of conversion and coherence; it is never acquired once and for all.

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION

Bible Translations

For the most part, we have used the Revised Standard Catholic Edition (REVCE),[204] and on occasion the Jerusalem Bible (JB)[205] or a slightly modified RSVCE to maintain the original emphasis of the French.

General Vocabulary

When Church documents are cited or referenced, we have tried to adopt vocabulary choices used in those texts in the surrounding section of the *Ratio*.

A general shift has taken place over the past decade in preference for Teutonic over Latinate terms in English translations of Church documents, and we have chosen to adopt this trend in our choice of vocabulary when appropriate. Where possible, we have signalled both the Latinate and Teutonic term when it first appears. Thus, *formation permanente* is, in its first instance, translated "permanent, ongoing formation," and thereafter "ongoing formation."

Capitalisation distinctions

For the most part, we have followed the style guide of Liturgical Press, Seventh Edition. We have, however, opted for British spelling and had to make some minor changes to suit the needs of the text:

Community / community: "Community" with a capital "C" refers to the Community of Saint John in general; "community" with a lower case "c" refers to the local community of a priory or convent.

Word of God / word of God: the French language distinguishes between the Person of the Word of God with the term "Verbe" and the word of God more generally (such as in reference to Scripture) with the term "Parole" (or "parole" with a lower case "p"). Following examples from *Verbum Domini* and *Vita Consecreta*, we employ, where possible, the capitalised "Word" to refer explicitly to the Person of the Word ("Verbe") and a lower case "word" when referring to the written text or when the Person of the Word is less explicit ("Parole" / "parole") (*Cf*. Verbum Domini, 6-7).[206]

Vocabulary (French terms in italics)

Accompagnement spirituelle: whilst "spiritual direction" and "spiritual director" are still commonly used in English, we have opted for the emerging terms "spiritual accompaniment" and "spiritual accompanier." These seem to be more universally used in the contemporary French Church and are becoming increasingly more frequent in English. Despite the awkwardness of "accompanier," we thought it better expressed the *Ratio*'s section on spiritual accompaniment and its implicit suggestion that the term "direction" could be misleading if not qualified, especially when relating to the internal forum. However, the term "director" is still used for other titles, such as Director of Formation and Postulant Director.

---

204. The Revised Standard Version of the Bible: Catholic Edition, copyright © 1965, 1966 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.
205. The Jerusalem Bible (London: Darton. Longman and Todd, 1966).
206. See also *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: New Testament*, Introduction, p. ix: "The word of God is Scripture. The Word of God is Jesus."

Accueillir: the French verb *accueillir* is used throughout the *Ratio*. Its semantic range means it has been translated by several different English terms: "to welcome," "to embrace," "to receive," "to accept." It is worth noting that the one theme carries through all these instances of various degree and specification.

Adoration: "worship" (Teutonic) and "adoration" (Latinate) are used interchangeably in this document, and always relate to latria (worship of God alone).

Alterité: "alterity" and "otherness" have been used interchangeably. "Otherness" has nothing of the pejorative in this document and should not be confused with the contemporary sense of "othering."

Charge: a *charge* in French can range from a mandate, such as the office of prior or working as a chaplain in a school or university, to a weekly chore, such as cleaning the floor or washing the dishes. We therefore translate it variously as "office," "task," or "responsibility."

Compétence: can refer both to a person's skills and proficiency and to the purview or scope of the role they occupy or authority they wield. "Competence" in English does not satisfactorily cover this range of meaning, and so we translate it variously as "skills and proficiency," "scope," or a relevant alternative.

Oraison: "contemplative prayer," following common usage and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (*cf.* Nos 2709-2719).

Sainte, sainteté: "holy," "holiness" (Teutonic); "sacred," "sanctity" (Latinate) are used interchangeably in this document.

THEMATIC INDEX

ACCOMPANIMENT: in general: 75, 84, 105, 157 §2, 159; fraternal–: 87, 88, 108, 236, 334-362, 357, 359; spiritual–: 55, 95, 119, 127 §4, 131 §2, 159, 305 §4; the matter of spiritual–: 137, 138, 140, 154, 156, 194, 197, 232, 246, 251, 348, 352, 354, 356 §3; pastoral–: 23, 182 §3, 232, 238 §2, 304-305, 312, 313, 315, 320, 329 §2. becoming a spiritual accompanier: 55, 300, 329 §2; accompanying perseverance: 38, 63;–given by communities: 56, 79, 89 §4, 92, 285, 358 §3;–given by formators: 101, 104, 105, 111, 113, 123-126, 127.

ADMISSION: 33, 110-111, 363, 372, 385-386, 405, 412, 448.

ADORATION: 18, 136, 138, 139, 146-148, 348.

ADULT: 105, 168, 180, 184, 186, 189, 252, 283, 315, 402, 415, 423, 431, 442.

AFFECTIVE: 6, 177-178, 179, 250, 376, 395, 431.

AFFECTIVITY: 17, 54, 175, 180, 182, 183, 199, 230, 231-232, 398, 423.

ANDRAGOGY: 105, 402, 415, 423.

APOSTOLATE: our–: 15, 21, 22-24, 214, 219, 302-311, 315-318; apostolic spirituality: 15, 22, 143, 153, 294-297; serving the Church in the–: 62, 298-302, 311-318; initial formation in the–: 380 (*postulancy*), 400 (*novitiate*), 436-440 (*temporary profession*), 413 (*placement*); placement in an apostolic priory: 413; a new way of supporting the–as age advances: 361; bearing fruit: 143, 160-164, 346.

ARCHIVES: 278, 286.

ASCETICISM: 154, 156, 158, 169, 206, 222, 233, 241.

ASSIGNMENT: 58, 92, 117, 177, 265, 270, 279, 287, 298, 335, 336, 339, 350, 356.

AUTHORITY:–and obedience: 39 §3, 53, 250, 251, 252, 254, 280, 281;–and fraternity: 58, 142 §3, 313 §3, 359, 357 §4;–and community: 89, 91, 92, 94, 185, 236 §2, 325; openness to–: 178 §3, 245, 391 §3, 442 §3; abuse of -: 42, 182 §4, 253, 283; formation of authorities: 285-287;–of formators: 111, 115 §4, 382 (*postulants*), 407 (*novices*), 441-444 (*temporary professed*), 451 (*young perpetually professed*).

CALL TO HOLY ORDERS (see also priesthood): during formation: 118, 378, 443, 450; preparation of future priests: 455; first steps as a priest: 337; first steps as a deacon: 338; adjusting one's vision of the priesthood: 43; brothers who are not priests: see clerical / non-clerical brothers.

CALL(ING): charism and–: 11-29, 32, 199, 258;–today: 34-50; perseverance in our–: 63, 99, 223; following Christ: 65-70, 224-225; responding to the -: 95, 135, 164, 192, 221, 230, 241, 251, 309, 365; following the calls of the Spirit: 141, 142, 143, 225, 230, 251, 254, 279.a, 320, 321-325; communal–: 281, 326.

CHAPTER: conventual–:28, 29, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92 §2, 95 §2, 236, 244, 245, 247, 248, 249 §3, 252 §3, 255, 265, 269-271, 278, 279, 281, 285-287, 309 §3, 310 §3, 326, 336, 337, 341, 371, 372, 384, 385, 412, 444; provincial – l: 6, 8, 28, 281; general–: 1, 28, 281.

CHARISM OF THE CONGREGATION: description of–: 12-29; formation in–: 11, 30-32, 35 §2, 101, 119, 132, 208 §3, 227, 252 §2, 302-310, 314-317, 331, 350, 369, 378, 387, 392, 398, 415, 418 §4, 425, 436, 451 §2; deploying–: 11, 31, 249, 270, 298, 366; Family of St John: 290.

CHARISMS AND PERSONAL GIFTS: 142, 266, 313.

CHASTITY: choosing–: 19 §2, 66 §3, 151 §1, 164 §2, 423 §1, 431 §2; formation in–: 54, 176, 177 §4, 178-183, 229-239, 431 §2; obstacles to–: 39 §2, 423 §2; community dimension of–: 226 §1, 236.

CHURCH: ecclesial communion: 1 §1, 2 §2, 3 §2, 9 §2, 11 §1, 13 §2, 21 §3, 99 §2, 106, 112 §3, 140 §2, 142 §2, 143, 157 §3, 161 §1, 182 §4, 236 §3, 243 §2, 249 §3-4, 252 §2, 286 §2, 288, 298, 301, 311 §1, 313 §1.3, 322 §2, 366, 400 §1, 427 §2; benefiting from the–: 97-98, 100 §1, 132 §1, 139 §1, 142 §1, 210, 212, 227, 317 §1; being of benefit for the–: 20, 11 §2, 17 §2.4, 22, 214, 228, 290-291, 292 §1, 293, 310 §3, 326 §1, 337 §1, 338 §2-3, 342 §4, 455 §1; becoming part of the missionary–: 23.

CLERICAL/NON-CLERICAL BROTHERS: clerical brothers: 43, 306 §4, 337-338, 455; lay brothers: 43 §1, 60, 443, 454; clericalism: 43, 60 §1, 301 §2.

COLLEGIALITY: 36 §2, 43 §1, 57, 60 §1, 89 §2, 210 §3, 255, 285 §1, 287 §1, 301 §2.

COMPETENCE: 50, 58, 63, 85, 106, 113-114, 171, 183, 218, 242, 249, 266, 285, 300, 307, 340-343, 354, 350, 382, 407, 412, 424, 434, 439;–and subsidiarity/authority: 252, 283, 287.

CONFIGURATION: 66, 74, 225, 361, 452, Glossary.

CONSCIENCE: 53, 63 §2, 86, 102 §3, 141 §2, 142 §2, 149 §1.3, 167 §1, 305 §3, 396.

CONTEMPLATION: 138, 202, 213, 216, 438; contemplative life: 26, 29, 153, 219, 237, 348, 426; contemplative sisters: 16, 87, 290, 369.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER: see "prayer".

CONVERSION: called to–: 70 §2, 150 §1, 156 §2, 150 §1, 222 §2, 246 §1, 356 §2; working on one's -: 93 §2, 141 §3, 154-155, 156 §3, 158 §2, 164 §3, 301 §2, 389, 401;–of intelligence: 201, 235 §1, Appendix V.I.; community dimension of–: 88 §2; ecological–: 243.

COOPERATION:–in formation and the common life: 185, 253 §4, 256 §2-3, 281 §2, 283 §1, 285 §4, 290 §2, 310 §2, 325, 328 §2, 342 §1, 358 §4, 382 §2, 397, 407 §1, 416 §2, 424 §2, 433 §2, 438 §2, 442; collaboration with other entities: 44, 61, 62, 185, 227 §3, 250 §2, 286 §1, 290 §1, 301, 309 §2, 318 §2, 326 §1, 337 §2, 366 §2, 453; inter-institute collaboration: 118-§3, 227 §3, 268 §1, 453-§2.

CULTURE: taking–into account: 1 §1, 5 §1, 9 §2, 31 §2, 34 §1, 36-37, 48, 50, 58-59, 84d, 112 §3, 113 §4, 177 §4, 187, 190, 196 §1, 208 §2, 211 §2-3, 212 §3-4, 219, 229 §1, 240 §2, 248 §2, 253 §2, 270 §1, 331 §2, 337 §3, 366 §1, 376 §2, 379 §2, 396, 420 §2, 428 §2, 429, 435 §2, Appendix 5, Appendix 6 I.1.a; adapting the Rationes Provincialis to the–: 6 §2, 363 §2, 366 §2, 398 §6.

DESERT: 29, 138, 148, 347-348, 350§3-352, 391, Glossary.

DESIRE:–for communion and love with God/Christ: 67 §3, 138 §2, 147 §2, 148 §2, 154, 163 §1, 202 §2, 224 §1, 250 §1, 268 §2;–for God present in every person: 23, 46b, 296 §1;–for holiness: 163 §1, 346, 171 §2.

DIACONATE: 60, 338, 455.

DICASTERY FOR RELIGIOUS (CICLSAL): 2 §1, 17 §5, 53, 55 §1, 57, 64 §1, 97 §1, 106, 153 §1, 156 §3, 222 §2, 244 §1, 249 §1, 250, 252, 254 §4, 255 §1-2, 272 §2, 280, 283 §3, 284, 291.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: 9, 48, 61, 336, 376, Appendix 6.

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FORMATION: 1 §3, 92 §4, 93, 118 §3.

DIRECTOR PROVINCIAL OF FORMATION: 8 §2, 85 §2, 92 §4, 93, 112 §3, 113 §5, 114 §4, 118 §3, 208 §7, 338 §5, 342 §4, 384.

DISCERNMENT:–in general: 30, 34 §2, 35 §2, 58, 62, 75, 84, 97 §1, 149, 225, 248, 252-254, 278 §2, 287, 313 §1.3, 349, 382 §3, 390 §2, 404, 407 §1, 418, Appendix 5 I.2c, Glossary;–of spirits: 140 §2, 157, 391 §3;–as part of our personal journey: 63 §2, 73 §4, 95 §3, 104, 110, 111, 130 §1, 131 §3, 141 §2, 148 §3, 159§1, 172 §1, 179 §3, 193-194, 231 §2, 250 §1, 337 §4, 342, 343, 355 §3, 356-357,

409d, 412, 420-421, 427 §2, 430 §1, 431 §2, 442 §1.3, 343; apostolic–: 293 §2, 319-328, 337 §2, 341; community/common–: 28, 57, 89 §4, 91 §3, 92 §2, 226 §2, 248, 252 §3, 255, 280, 282, 305 §4, 326, 342 §4, 395 §1, 416 §2-3, 438, 443;–of vocation: 33 §1, 363, 367, 371-373, 377, 383-384, 387 §2, 433 §2;–with authority or accompanier: 57, 75 §2, 143 §3, 159 §1, 194 §2, 250 §1, 253 §4, 254, 342 §3, 434 §2, 433 §2, 452 §1;–of the community practice of the vows: 226, 245 §2, 248 §1, 255, 279, 280, 282.

DOCIBILITY: 83, 103, 395, Glossary.

ECOLOGY: 50b, 243.

ESCHATOLOGY: 15 §3, 20, 162, 163, 296 §2.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: 311, 375, 377 §1.

EUCHARIST: adoration of the–: 18, 147; celebration of the–: 139, 147.

EVANGELICAL COUNCILS (vows): 32 §2, 39, 66 §4, 102 §4, 151, 175 §4, 220-228, 239, 353, 398 §3, 430-431.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE: 8 §3, 33 §2, 47a, 49b, 50b, 53, 59, 69 §1, 95 §3, 102 §3, 136 §2, 138 §3, 141 §2, 142 §2, 149 §3, 155 §2, 158 §3, 167 §2, 194 §2-3, 201 §2, 232 §2, 251 §1, 253 §4, 254 §2, 391 §3, 418 §2.

EXTERIORITY: self-referentiality: 92 §5, 95 §2, 192 §5, 337 §2; calling on external resources: 55 §1, 84, 98 §1, 110 §2, 112 §1, 114 §4, 126, 130-131, 166 §1, 177 §3, 183 §2, 189 §4, 207 §3, 328 §3, 264 §3, 272 §2, 279e, 285 §2, 304, 328 §3, 359 §3, 407 §2, 412 §2c, 424 §2, 444 §1.

FAITH AND REASON (dialogue between): 17, 23, 211, 213, 214.

FAITHFULNESS:–in general: 19, 33, 63, 70, 88, 94, 99, 105, 249, 268, 344, 402, 428;–to the vows: 97, 222, 253, 419;–to God: 86, 231, 242, 273;–of God: 183, 221, 223, 279e; 346, 360.

FAMILY:–of origin: 84c, 177 §4, 179 §3, 186, 227 §3, 229 §1, 350 §3, 376 §2, 407 §1, 423 §2; apostolate to the–: 316, 318 §2.

FAMILY OF SAINT JOHN: 3 §2, 16 §3, 35 §2, 44, 87 §4, 110 §2, 118 §4, 278 §1, 290, 292 §2, 369 §2, 398 §3, 435.

FORMATION OF AUTHORITIES AND FORMATORS: 8 §2, 58, 84a, 93 §2, 113-115, 117 §1, 122 §3, 285 §1, 286-287, 423 §2, 441, 442 §1.

FORMATION PLANS: local–: 34, 105 §1, 111 §3, 128 §1, 130 §2, 131 §3, 417, 445, Appendix 1.II.1, Appendix 3.I.2 and II.A, Appendix 4.II , specific–as part of initial formation: 122 §2, 208,–for each brother (ongoing formation): 92 §3, 109, Appendix 4-I.

FRATERNITY: the fraternal dimension of our life: 16, 28, 56, 79, 87, 134, 152, 184 §1, 208 §4, 218, 226 §1, 236 §1.4, 255 §1, 256-262, 267-268, 273, 277, 285 §2, 289-291, 292, 310 §1, 357 §1, 359 §4, 399 §1, 433, Appendix 5.I.2b; fraternal exercise of authority: 58, 91 §2, 115 §4.

FREEDOM: Christian–and–in one's choice of the evangelical counsels: 39 §3, 41, 46c, 47a, 53, 63 §2, 72 §1, 74 §1, 78, 82, 91 §3, 95 §1, 102 §3, 104, 105 §1, 141 §1, 149 §2, 156 §1, 160 §1, 162 §1, 182 §1, 186 §1, 194 §1, 231 §1, 232 §1.2, 240-241, 299 §2, 301 §2, 344 §1, 362 §1, 401, 409 §1, 419 §1; personal–/–of conscience: 53, 63 §2, 82, 86, 115 §3, 149 §1, 164 §2, 178 §2, 179 §3, 189 §4, 192, 194 §1.3, 250 §2, 253, 254 §2, 282c, 283 §1, 305 §3, 309 §2, 320 §2, 323, 365 §2, 366 §2, 374 §2, 377 §3, 415 §3, 421-422, 423 §2, 424 §2, 451 §2; formation and–: 53, 115 §3, 192, 215 §3, 216 §3, 222 §2, 223, 225 §1, 253, 276, 216 §3, 383, 393, 397, 402, 404, 411 §3, 416 §1, 418 §3, 431 §2, 433 §2, 442 §1, 443;–in one's choice of accompanier: 95 §3, 109 §3, 222 §2;–of Christ: 295 §1; false–: 50d, 237 §1, 420 §2.

GIFT OF SELF: 53, 71, 74, 180, 183, 189 §1, 191 §1, 233, 311 §2, 393, 394, 399 §2, 400 §2, 401, 404, 437 §2.

GOVERNANCE: general and provincial–: 36, 37 §1, 51d, 57, 92 §1, 187 §4, 250, 252-254, 256 §3,

281-285, 287, 313 §3, 321 §2, 326, 356 §1; local–: 58, 89 §2, 91, 115 §4, 142 §3, 286, 143 §3, 185, 236 §2, 350 §3, 434 §2, 441-442, 449 §2; abuse of authority: 42, 54, 55 §1, 182 §4, 236 §2, 252 §3, 285 §4.

HISTORY: taking one's place in the–of the community: 11 §2, 29, 30, 89 §1, 101, 378 §1, 392 §2, 398 §3; taking one's place in the–of a priory: 89 §1.3, 278-279; reading our life as a sacred – : 72 §1.4, 73 §1, 85c, 160 §2, 165 §2, 189 §3, 192 §2, 196 §2, 392 §2-3, 420 §2, Appendix 1.II.1h.

HOPE: 15, 46, 63, 91, 102, 135, 155, 160-161, 163, 279, 296, 345, 355, 358, 362.

HOLY SPIRIT: receiving our charism and the means to live by it from the–: 11 §1, 12, 17 §3, 32 §3, 35, 43 §1, 75 §2, 81 §1, 139 §1, 157 §2, 228 §1, 320 §3, 323 §1, 427 §2; role of–in formation: 14 §3, 66 §1, 70 §2-3, 83, 104, 119 §2, 140-143, 149 §1, 195 §1, 202, 225 §1, 248 §1, 251 §1, 267, 282 §1, 328 §1, 344 §2, 399 §1,430 §2, 451 §2; role of–in mission: 41, 45 §1, 295 §2, 306 §2, 320 §1, 322 §1, 345 §1, 364, 451 §2, Appendix 5,I.2c.

HUMAN RESOURCES (taking into account the skills and proficiency of every brother): 58, 85 §2, 118 §3, 171, 172 §1, 218 §3, 253 §2, 266, 283 §1, 313, 340, 343, 350 §2, 354 §2, 412 §2c.

HUMILITY: seeking–: 75 §2, 136, 153 §1, 154, 158 §2, 167 §1, 170 §2, 178 §3, 188 §1, 192 §2, 204 §1, 214 §3, 216 §2, 217 §2, 232 §3, 233 §3, 235 §1, 236 §1, 299 §2, 313 §2, 344, 345 §1, 346;–of Christ: 236 §1.

INTEGRAL FORMATION: 9 §1, 17 §2, 35 §2, 46c, 52, 66 §2, 67, 107 §3, 117 §5, 118 §2, 123 §1, 210 §1, 417, Appendix 3.I.

INTEGRATION: process of–: 71-75, Glossary;–of something on a human level: 49b, 54, 56, 59, 71, 73, 74 §1, 186, 192 §3, 195 §1, 208 §4, 318 §1, 551 §1, 359 §1, 391 §1, 392 §3, 403, 404;–of formation and the charism: 52 §3, 71, 84b, 111 §2, 118, 179 §1, 415, 417-418, 434 §2, 442 §1;–of one's affectivity: 176-181, 232 §3, 395 §2, 420 §2, 423 §1;–of studies: 52, 107 §1, 118 §1.3, 190, 215, 342 §2, 426-427, 451;–of experience: 73, 186 §2, 336 §3, 337 §2.4, 408 §1, 412 §3;–of the apostolate: 438, 444 §1;–of weaknesses and crises: 89 §1.4, 197, 420 §2.

JOHN (Saint): 13-21, 66, 67 §3, 135 §2, 137 §3, 138 §2, 142 §2, 148 §1, 154, 157 §2, 158 §1, 159 §1, 212 §1, 216 §2, 238 §2, 296 §3, 302 §1, 315 §1, 362 §1, 365 §2, 378 §2, 379 §2, 391 §2, 392 §1, 398 §2.

JOY:–in fraternal life: 8 §5, 24, 145 §3, 267, 273, 277 §2, 279c; Christian–: 155 §2, 160 §2, 223 §3, 241 §2, 303 §2, 313 §3, 315 §1, 344 §2, 345, 346, 353 §2, 400 §2, 431 §2, 437 §2;–in apostolic life: 15, §2, 337 §3;–in knowing the truth: 206 §1, 218 §3; human – : 50 §c, 191.

LAYPEOPLE: 60, 131, 454; cooperation with–: 62, 98, 131, 227, 243, 248, 272, 289, 359.

LECTIO DIVINA: 17, 145, 208, 210, 218, 230, 338, 354, 377, 391, 418, 427.

LITURGY: 67, 69, 99, 138, 146, 148, 160, 210, 224, 266, 275, 278, 297, 337-338, 398.

MANAGEMENT (financial): 248-249, 286-287.

MARY: 13, 15, 19, 99, 162, 297, 345, 348.

MASTER OF THE TEMPORARY PROFESSED: 117 §1.4, 412 §4, 416 §1.3, 440-444, 445, 446.

MATURITY: human–: 48b, 88 §2, 402; spiritual–: 52 §2, 88, 161, Glossary; formation in–: 1 §1, 52 §2, 78, 102 §1, 161, 164 §3, 165 §1, 174, 181 §3, 215 §3, 331 §2, 395, 415 §1; affective–: 175, 180-184, 229 §2, 377 §1, 423 §1; communal–: 89 §3, 273 §1, 318 §1; integral–: 78, Glossary; immaturity: 39 §2, 309 §1, 357 §3, 366 §1, 376 §2.

MERCY:–in general: 23, 154-155, 158, 308, 318; God's–: 197.

MISSION (see apostolate):–received from the Church / from superiors : 11 §2, 15 §1, 15 §3, 21 §3, 22-24, 34 §1, 62, 67 §3, 87 §3-4, 90, 92 §1, 108 §1, 111, 115 §4, 125, 143 §1, 172 §1, 173 §3, 184 §1, 217 §1, 227 §2, 228 §1, 230 §1, 249 §1, 250 §2,

270 §1, 277, 279, 280, 290 §1, 298, 300, 302 §1, 304, 313 §1, 319 §2, 321-322, 326, 339 §1-2, 341, 360 §1, 380 §2, 400 §1 ;–letter: 112 §1, 265 §3, 298 §3, 444 §2.

MISSION LETTER: see "mission".

MONASTIC: 29, 350, 351.

NOVICE MASTER: mission of–: 110 §2, 119 §3, 177, 122 §1.5, 124, 390 §1, 391 §3, 392 §2, 397, 398 §2, 403, 407; status of–: 116 §4, 121; role of–: 108 §3.

OBEDIENCE:–to the commandment of love: 16, 152 §1;–to Christ, to God, to Mary: 19 §2, 74 §2, 140 §3, 146 §2, 162 §1, 194 §1, 203 §1, 282 §1, 353 §2; vow of – in the footsteps of Christ: 40 §3, 53, 61, 66 §3, 81 §2, 151 §1, 164 §2, 186 §2, 222 §2, 228, 239, 245 §1, 321 §2, 323 §2, 336 §4, 352 §3, 389, 430 §1-2; community dimension of–: 185, 226 §1, 438 §2;–to the prior / chapter: 91 §1, 325, 326 §2; formation in -: 250-254, 395 §1, 431 §2, 442 §1;–to the Church / ecclesiastical authorities: 20 §1-2, 95 §1, 227 §3, 298 §1, 301 §2, 337 §2;–to Proper Law: 281 §2;–to one's conscience: 53, 141, 142 §2, 167 §2, 192 §3, 194, 203§1, 253§4.

PARISH: 23,270, 305, 326.

PASCAL MYSTERY: 13 §2, 18 §2, 69 §3, 70 §2, 81 §2, 146 §2; formation as participation in the–: 71, 74 §1, 154, 157, 160, 201 §2, 334 §1, 356 §1, 361 §1, 362 §1, 358 §1;–in the liturgy: 146 §1, 147 §1, 347 §1.

PEDAGOGY: defining–: 7, 8, 18, 93, 106;–for growth in formation: 52, 76-79, 105;–and initial formation: 103, 105, 11§2, 402, 403, 414-416.

PENANCE:–in general: 154-156, 169; sacrament of: 96, 155.

PHILOSOPHY: purpose of formation in–: 15 §2, 17 §3, 47a, 48b, 107, 136 §3, 165 §3, 194 §2, 196 §3-4, 200 §2, 201, 217 §1.3, 308 §1, 411; place of formation in–: 23, 67 §3, 106, 107 §1-2, 164 §3, 175 §4, 195 §2, 202 §2, 203, 211-214, 215 §2, 216 §3, 379 §2, 398 §4, 411, 427 §2.

PLACEMENT:–in an apostolic priory: 87, 117, 125, 410, 412, 439, 443-444, 451-452; professional placement: 249 §4.

POVERTY: vow of – in the footsteps of Christ: 39 §1-4, 66 §3, 151 §1, 164 §2, 222 §2, 228 §1-2, 239, 323 §2, 389, 431 §2; formation in -: 240-249, 395 §1, 443;–and natural / interior weakness: 156 §2, 161 §1, 182 §3, 197 §3, 238 §2, 241 §1, 266 §1, 299 §1, 355 §1, 443; closeness to the poor: 152 §2, 214 §1-2, 243 §2, 244, 249 §4, 301 §2, 308 §1, 313 §2, 314, 317, 322 §1, 338 §3, 380 §1, 438 §2; community dimension of–: 226 §1, 430 §1.

PRAYER:–at the centre of our life: 15 §1, 24, 26, 99 §2-3, 102 §4, 122 §4, 138 §1, 139, 148, 203 §1, 255 §2, 282 §2a, 294, 297, 310 §1, 316 §1, 321 §2, 324, 329 §1, 338 §3, 348 §4, 359 §4, 360 §1, 377 §2, 391 §1, 400 §1, 452 §2; liturgical–: 275 §1, 338 §3; prayer / contemplation: 14, 16, 67, 138, 145, 147-148, 150, 154, 210, 216 §1, 268, 297, 308, 377, 390-391.

PREACHING: 23, 210, 303-304, 06, 308, 338.

PRIESTHOOD:–of Christ: 15, 68, 99 §2, 139, 140, 293 §1, 297;–of the faithful: 43, 68, 99 §2, 139, 293, 398 §2; call to–: 43, 337, 378, 412§4, 425, 443, 447, 453 §1, 455.

PRIOR (role of): 8, 84a, 91, 95 §4, 116, 121, 247, 253 §4, 266 §3, 279c, 283 §1, 285-286, 310 §3, 335 §1, 336 §1.3, 337 §3-4, 338 §1, 341 §1, 342 §4, 357 §3-4, 354 §3, 355 §4, 357 §4, 371, 405 §2, 412 §3-4, 444 §1-2, 449 §2, 451 §3.

PRIOR GENERAL: 6 §3-4, 36 §1, 92 §5, 94, 112 §3, 350 §1, 447, 448, 454.

PRIOR PROVINCIAL: 6 §3, 89 §4, 92, 112 §1, 265 §3, 286 §3, 287, 313 §3, 350 §3-4, 355 §4, 357 §4, 359 §2, 366 §2, 372 §2, 374 §1, 382 §1, 385 §1, 441, 448, 449 §2.

PROPHECY: 21, 61, 313.

PROVINCE (running of): 6, 8, 35 §2, 56, 90, 94, 112 §1, 113 §3, 249 §4, 265 §3, 286 §1, 300 §3, 309 §3, 374 §1, 386, 398 §6, 403, 406, Appendix 3.

PSYCHOLOGY: 54, 56, 72, 81 §2, 84 a-b, 89, 106, 126, 157, 175, 178 §3, 181, 189, 196 §3, 211 §3, 350 §2, 352 §3, 354 §3, 356 §3, 359 §3, 416 §1, 446; human sciences: 54, 56, 81, 106, 175, 190, 196, 211.

RATIO PROVINCIALIS: 6, 8 §2, 34 §2, 90, 93 §2, 331 §2; entering into–6 §1-2, 109 §1, 285 §3, 363 §2, 366 §2, 373, 374 §2, 386, Appendix 3.

RELAXATION: 175, 188, 190, 426, 452.

RENEWAL: 14, 85, 114, 329, 350, 354.

REST: 91, 173, 188§2, 329, 331, 347-349, 351, 422, 426.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE: to know oneself: 58, 59, 72, 119 §2, 137 §1, 156 §3, 165, 175, 178, 189 §1, 192, 194, 195 §1, 196-197, 203 §1, 207 §3, 208 §2, 211 §4, 251 §1, 253 §1.4, 254 §2, 264, 286 §2, 330, 317 §2, 337 §4, 354 §2, 355 §2, 376 §2, 394, 395 §2, 412 §2c, 420, 423, 438, Appendix 5,I, 49b;–in grace: 75 §1, 95 §3, 137 §1, 149 §1, 156 §2, 201-202, 225 §1, 322 §1; false–: 47b, 75 §2, 189, 391 §3.

SEXUALITY: 39, 54, 176-180, 229, 231, 233, 395, 423, 431

SILENCE: 29, 137-138, 148, 156, 350, 357, 390

SOLITUDE: positive–: 29, 138, 141, 148, 189, 231, 337, 348, 391; not walking alone: 75, 140 ,157; confronting–: 179; isolation: 50, 337, 342, 357.

SPIRITUAL COMBAT: 15, 42, 73, 154, 156-157, 179, 222, 233, 352, 356, 391, 409, 418, 433.

STUDIES: place of–in the Congregation: 17, 27, 102 §4, 107 §1-2, 122 §4, 164 §3, 199-20, 212 §2, 237 §2, 379, 398 §1, 411 §1, 425; purpose of–: 52 §2, 202 §2, 215 §1, 216 §3, 217, 219, 411 §2-3; organisation of–during initial formation: 410-411, 426-429; brothers in charge of–: 118, 121, 123 §1, 129, 342 §3, 429 §2, 451; community intellectual work: 8 §3, 27, 67 §3, 90, 150 §3, 218, 236 §2, 274, 276, Appendix 1.II, Appendix 4,II; ongoing formation and study: 114 §2;–outside of the community: 113 §3, 342, 453.

SUBJECT (the person as): 47b, 49a, 53, 82, 168 §1, 253 §1, 409a, 421 §2, 423 §2, 435 §1.

SUBSIDIARITY: 36, 89 §2, 236 §2, 253 §3, 280, 283, 301, 318.

SUPERVISION: 115, 285, 287, 330, 337.

SYNODALITY: 36 §2, 43 §1, 60 §1, 210 §3, 301 §2.

SYSTEMIC (psychology): 40, 56, 175, Glossary.

TEACHERS: 9, 113, 129, 416, 427-428.

TEACHING:–as a mission: 23, 207, 210 §2, 304, 307, 308; the place of–in formation: 52 §1, 105 §3, 107 §3, 118 §1, 129 §2, 208 §2, 369.

THEOLOGY: studying–in the Congregation: 67 §3, 136 §3, 209-213, 216 §3, 217; formation in–: 66 §4, 113 §3, 146 §3, 150, 413, 427 §2, 453; 4th year of–: 455;–and philosophy: 17 §3, 136 §3, 165 §3, 196 §3, 202 §2, 211 §1, 215 §2; community dimension of theological inquiry: 218; type of–to be avoided: 46c.

TRUTH: love and search for the–at the heart of our Congregation: 17, 26, 67 §3, 107, 167, 199-203, 211 §1, 213 §1, 214, 215-219, 251 §2, 302 §2, 306 §1, 308 §1, 379 §1, 398 §4, 411; love and search for the–for each brother: 27, 72, 73 §1, 113 §1, 167, 206 §1, 390 §1, 394, 393, 425, 416 §4, 427 §2, 428 §2; common search for–: 16 §2, 24, 28, 67 §3, 84a, 136 §3, 207 §3; obstacles to–: 49a, 237, 302 §2.

VIRTUES (human and Christian): acquisition of–: 102 §3, 175 §1, 184-185, 215 §3;–of chastity: 54, 232; other–: 83, 136 §1, 195, 251 §1, 395, 423 §1; passions : 137 §2, 149 §1, 158 §2, 160 §1, 165 §1, 175 §2, 177 §2, 178 §2, 230 §2, 233 §2-3, 243 §3, 323 §2, 391 §3, 395 §2, 420 §2.

VOCATIONS: promotion of–: 33, 38, 309, 364-366;–Promoter : 366, 371, 382.

VOWS: (see evangelical counsels).

WISDOM:–of God: 201, 219, 298, 317; the three -: 17, 202, 217; philosophical–: 17, 211, 398, 412 §2; wise good sense: 175, 195-198, 211, 216, 356, 360, 398, 412 §2; the world in search of–: 46b, 47a, 48b, 219, 308;–of the Church 106, 227, 301 §2; formation,–and government: 63, 107, 359.

WOMEN:–in the Church: 44, 131; gender/femininity: 47, 177, 181, 376; collaboration with–: 182, 218, 231, 238, 423, 431, 439.

WORD OF GOD IN FORMATION: 24, 69 §3, 70 §2, 162 §1, 225 §1, 311 §1; role of the -: 17 §3, 66 §1, 75 §2, 81 §1, 95 §1, 107 §2, 135 §2, 145, 148 §1, 150 §1, 155 §1, 210, 217, 223, 251 §2, 338 §3, 391 §2, 398 §2; hearing the–: 137 §1, 141 §2, 142 §2, 149 §3, 167 §2, 194 §1, 251 §1, 348 §1; priority of the Word of God in study and preaching: 210, 212 §1-2, 217, 306, 338 §3, 398 §2, 427 §2; Word of God in discernment: 119 §2, 250 §1.

YOUTH (apostolate to young people): 13 §3, 23, 194 §3, 296 §3, 300 §1, 305 §1, 314-315, 336 §1, 337-338, 365 §2, 366 §2, 439 §2.