

FORMATION OF SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

PRINCIPLES AND NORMS

**RATIO FUNDAMENTALIS
INSTITUTIONIS ET STUDIORUM**

Fourth Edition

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	Acts of the General Council
art	article
ASC	Acts of the Superior Council/Chapter
BM	Biographical Memoirs of St John Bosco
C	Constitutions
can	canon of the Code of Canon Law, 1983
CEC	Congregation for Catholic Education
cfr	confer
GC	General Chapter
SGC	Acts of the Special General Chapter, 1971
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici</i>
CIVCSVA	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
CRIS	Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes
DSM	The Salesian Rector, a ministry for the animation and governing of the local community Rome, 1986
Ibid	ibidem
ISM	<i>aspettore salesiano</i> , Rome, 1987
MuR	<i>Mutuae Relations</i> Directives for the mutual relations between bishops and religious in the Church, Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and Congregation for Bishops, 1978
OT	<i>Optatam Totius</i> — Vatican II
PC	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i> — Vatican II
PDV	<i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> , Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day, John Paul II, 1990
PI	<i>Potissimum institutions</i> , Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 1990
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i> — Vatican II
R	General Regulations
RFIS	<i>Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis</i> , Congregation for Catholic Education, 1985
SaC	<i>Sacerdotalis Coelibatus</i> , Encyclical Letter, Paul VI, 1967
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> — Vatican II
VC	<i>Vita Consecrata</i> Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the consecrated life and its mission in the church and the world, John Paul II, 1996

DECREE OF PROMULGATION

We are called the disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, witnesses to the Kingdom and missionaries to the young living the charismatic experience that the Holy Spirit has raised up in the Church through Don Bosco.

Formation to the apostolic Salesian religious life finds in the normative document *Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco. Principles and Norms* and in *Criteria and Norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions*, which complements it, a sure guide. The *Ratio* in fact "sets out in an organic and instructive way the complexus of principles and norms concerning formation which are found in the Constitutions, general Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation." (R. 87)

The GC24 asked for revision and an updating of the *Ratio* promulgated in 1985 (GC24 147). In making such a request, the Chapter took into consideration the guidelines of the Church on the consecrated life and priestly ministry which had appeared after the publication of the previous edition, particularly the apostolic exhortations *Vita Consecrata* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the challenges of evangelization and inculturation, of considerable impact for a vocation which develops at world level in a variety of contexts, the new aspects of Salesian vocational experience underlined by recent General Chapters, the need to make a suitable response to present day requirements and to problems of formation. At the same time the Chapter members recognized the substantial validity of the structure, the criteria and the directives of the 1985 *Ratio* and emphasised the need for greater consistency in translating it into formation practice.

In carrying out the revision, the parameters of the task set by the GC24 have been faithfully observed and the comments and suggestions coming from both the Provinces and the experts consulted in this regard have been carefully considered.

Consequently, having obtained the approval of the General Council as prescribed by art. 132 §4 of our Constitutions, in virtue of the authority which belongs to my office, by this Decree, I promulgate today, 8th December 2000, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the **FORMATION OF SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO, PRINCIPLES AND NORMS. *Ratio Fundamental Institutionis et Studiorum***, the third edition, which is to be faithfully observed throughout the Salesian Congregation. It will come into effect according to universal law. This same act of promulgation extends also to the text of **CRITERIA AND NORMS FOR SALESIAN VOCATION DISCERNMENT. ADMISSIONS**, revised in harmony with the *Ratio*.

The *Ratio* which I now entrust to you is an expression of the care of the Congregation for the gift received and for the vocation of each member; it is an invitation to every Salesian to respond every day to the call of the Lord with the commitment to "an adequate ongoing formation" (C 96); it urges every Province called to accompany the vocation of each confrere in the different circumstances and stages of life to exercise its responsibility for the charism and to support the Salesian experience in the local communities.

I entrust this fundamental document to Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians so that "Don Bosco's Teacher" may be the inspiration, the support, the guide of our formation and help us to follow with joy and renewed fidelity to our apostolic consecration for the young "our own way to holiness" (C 2) and our complete fulfilment in Christ (cfr C 22).

Rome, 8 December 2000

Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi
Rector Major

REVISION OF THE “RATIO” REGARDING THE PRENOVITIATE

Rome, 22 July 2009
Prot. 09/0787

To Rev.
Father Provincial

For information
To Rev.
Provincial Formation Delegate

Subject: Revised Text of the “Ratio” regarding the Prenovitiate

Dear Fr Provincial,

On 16 July the Rector Major with the General Council approved the new formulation of the “Ratio” regarding the Prenovitiate, which I attach to this letter.

1. Motives for the revision

In accordance with the Project of animation and government for the six-year period starting from September 2008 the Department for Formation launched a process for the revision of the text of the “Ratio” regarding the prenovitiate. The purpose of this was to help each Province to carry out a serious assessment of the formation experience of its own prenovitiate noting its strengths and its weaknesses.

At the same time it was meant to identify some new shared guidelines so as to further strengthen this stage, which continues to be very weak and not very well focused on the fundamental objectives of human maturity, of a convinced experience of the Christian faith, of the maturing of the vocational option and of vocational discernment.

Progress has been made in the quality of the formative experience of the prenovitiate but it is still not sufficient. The weakness of the prenovitiate then inevitably has repercussions on all the other stages of formation. In initial formation, in fact, vocational fragility continues to persist.

2. Process of the revision

Following the GC26 the Department, in consultation with the Regional Coordinators of Formation, prepared a first draft for the revision of the text regarding the prenovitiate. In the Regional Formation Commissions held between September and November 2008, first impressions were collected and suggestions were given about the way the work was to be undertaken.

After this, by March 2009 almost all the Provincial Formation Commissions had sent in their replies. In May and June the Department studied the replies from the Provinces and prepared a new revised text which has now been studied, integrated and approved by the Rector Major and the General Council.

3. Changes in the revision

The revised text has maintained the same numbers; it is about the same length; there has been a simplification of “the guidelines and norms for praxis.” The changes introduced with respect to the previous “Ratio” regard above all the fact that in the Congregation, in accordance with article 109 of the Constitutions and with the GC26, there is new attention being given to vocational accompaniment and to the aspirantate prior to the prenovitiate: 329. More emphasis is given to the process of human maturity, to the help provided by the professional psychologist, and to the family: 332. The centrality of the relationship with the Lord Jesus receives added emphasis as do the faith journey, catechesis, the formation of conscience, initiation into spiritual guidance: 339.

Aspects regarding intellectual formation are also revised, as are the formation community, the community experience, the formation team and the spiritual guide: 342, 344, 345. There are significant additions regarding the care of health, manual work, games and sport, personal media and the mass media, music and instrumental playing, the theatre and youth forms of expression: 333, 336, 337, 342. More emphasis is given to the assessment of suitability for Salesian consecrated life and to the need for greater attention to vocational suitability, also involving the prenovices themselves in the discernment process: 346. Finally there is a reformulation of the “guidelines and norms for the praxis” avoiding the excessive repetitions of the previous text: 348-356.

This text is now being entrusted to the Province, in particular to the prenovitiate community, to the Provincial Formation Commission, to the Provincial Council so that it may be studied, and above all, so that, on the basis of this new formulation, **during the year 2010 the Provincial Plan for the Prenovitiate may be revised.**

It is my hope that this work will strengthen and give greater quality to this stage of formation. I thank you even now for your collaboration and send you my best wishes.

In Don Bosco,

Fr Francesco Cereda
General Councillor for Formation

REVISION OF THE “RATIO” CONCERNING THE INITIAL FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER

Rome, 18 January 2012
Prot. 12/0071

To the Reverend
Fr. Provincial
at his address

To the Reverend
Provincial Formation Delegate
at his address

Subject: Revision of the “Ratio” concerning the initial formation of the Salesian Brother

Dear Provincial and Delegate,

After a study in our Formation Department, a consultation in the Provinces and a deliberation in the General Council, on the 13th of January this year the Rector Major with his Council approved some modifications to the text of the “Ratio” on the formation of the Salesian Brother.

One of the four elements needed to foster an appreciation and a growth of the lay form of our Salesian consecrated vocation is a high quality formation. In fact, the “care and advancement of the Salesian Brother’s vocation” requires, in addition to formation, a widespread knowledge of his vocational identity, his “visibility”, and the promotion of his vocation (cfr. AGC 382, Rome 2003, pp. 29-43).

GC26 offered a new outlook on the Salesian Brother’s vocation in its third key issue by describing the uniqueness of the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms. New situations also called for appropriate responses in the formation of the Salesian Brother. And so, some modifications of the “Ratio” became necessary for the whole Congregation. I am giving you here a bird’s-eye view of the changes that you will find in the attachment to this letter.

1. A global presentation of the formation process

Oftentimes in the past, the formation of the Salesian Brother was fraught with uncertainties. Improvisations took place under the guise of flexibility. For various reasons of vocation and of formation, a global view of the process became a felt need. This global view has now been formulated, keeping in mind that the formation of the Salesian, whether brother or priest, is “one in its essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions” (Const. 100).

In number 323 of the revised text, you will now find a global presentation of the formation process of the Salesian Brother. The uncertainties surrounding the stages of formation have been swept away, and our candidates are now offered a clear picture of the Salesian Brother's formation, which is on a par with that of the Salesian cleric, albeit with its proper characteristics. It now falls to each Province to lay down its practical decisions in this matter in the formation section of its Province Directory.

2. Vocation discernment

Till now a serious omission in the formation method was the scant attention paid to the aspect of vocational discernment concerning the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation. This was mostly left to the individual; there was no mention made of objective criteria; and no distinctions were drawn regarding each phase's contribution to the discernment itself.

Now instead you will find importance given to discernment. In the first place, it is recommended that, following the presentation in the prenovitiate of Salesian consecrated life in its two forms and the presence of a Salesian Brother on the formation team (n. 345), there should be a discernment carried out in the novitiate by all the novices regarding their own Salesian vocation as future priest or brother (nn. 371, 384), drawing on and studying the indications given in numbers 84-87 of "Criteria and norms".

For the Salesian Brother, the discernment carries on – during the postnovitiate, when he has to identify the field of work in which to carry out the Salesian mission in the future (n. 417); in the choice he has to make of the professional qualification to be achieved, preferably before practical training (n. 409, 417, 425); and in practical training, when he is assigned to a setting in which to practise the professional qualification he has acquired (n. 439).

Furthermore, in the course of preparation for perpetual profession, Salesian clerics and Brothers are asked to review their entire formation process in order to deepen their motivations, also regarding the form of vocation they have chosen; this discernment is done before they begin their specific formation, if it should precede their perpetual profession (n. 512).

Finally, a more serious and responsible process is to be embarked upon in the case of a Salesian Brother asking for a change in his choice of vocation; however, such a case must be an exception, and the conclusion of the process will be a decision by the Rector Major (n. 481).

3. Academic studies

Academic studies are recognized as important for the Salesian Brother. They are not a useless lengthening of the formation process to the detriment of professional qualification. A Brother needs a philosophical and pedagogical as well as a theological and pastoral foundation.

To this end, provision is now made for an equivalent two-year, or at most three-year, programme of philosophical and pedagogical studies during the postnovitiate; these studies will be a help to understand contemporary culture and to acquire the skills needed in the field of education (nn. 409, 417, 425).

The Salesian Brother's specific formation too, which includes theological and pastoral studies, is now spelt out more clearly so as to avoid any confusion between specific formation and

professional qualification. Explicit mention is made of the need for all Salesian Brothers to complete this phase in a regional or interregional centre established for the purpose (nn. 456, 480).

4. Professional qualification

In the recent past, professional qualification was often neglected because it was not properly made part of the formation process. And though, according to our tradition, the world of work and professional formation continue to be very important, not all Salesian Brothers have felt drawn to work in this field and therefore to acquire the necessary technical skills.

The fact is that the needs of our mission are many and varied, and therefore qualification in the professional field includes acquiring the necessary skills needed to fulfil tasks in various other fields besides professional training, such as, for example, the school, social communication, social work, administration and management. Such a qualification must ensure for the Brother a competence that puts him on a par with a lay person exercising the same profession in civil society (n. 409).

Professional qualification requires a discernment to be done during the postnovitiate (nn. 409, 417, 425); it is best achieved, if possible, before practical training (n. 439); and it can be completed with a professional specialization after specific formation (nn. 456, 480).

It is my hope that all this may contribute to an enhancement of the quality of formation given to this form of the Salesian consecrated vocation.

May our Salesian Brothers, Blessed Artemide Zatti, Venerable Simon Srugi, and the Servant of God, Stephen Sandor, intercede for us and obtain for us from God the gift of this precious vocation.

With my cordial greetings,

In Don Bosco,

Fr. Francesco Cereda
General Councillor for Formation

NOTE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

Several times in the past there have been requests for a new edition of the Ratio. Given of the enormous labour and time that would have been involved in such a task, however, Fr Pascual Chávez asked the Formation Department to revise only certain parts of this important document – the chapter on the prenovitiate, and certain articles referring to the initial formation of the Salesian Brother. These revisions were, up to now, available only in the form of separate documents on the website of the congregation, www.sdb.org; a new edition incorporating the revisions was never published.

We have now decided to make available at least online a complete text of the Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco incorporating the revisions, with the text on the prenovitiate being highlighted in blue, and the new articles on the initial formation of the Salesian Brother in green. The two letters of Fr Francesco Cereda containing the revised texts will also be available online. This is what we are referring to as the *fourth edition*.

May our dear Don Rua, along with venerable Simaan Srugi intercede for us as we heed the calls of our recent general chapters to strengthen our Salesian consecrated identity in its two forms.

*Ivo Coelho, SDB
General Councillor for Formation
Feast of Don Rua, 29 October 2016*

First Part

**SALESIAN FORMATION
IN GENERAL**

We live as disciples of the Lord by the grace of the Father, who consecrates us through the gift of his Spirit and sends us out to be apostles of the young.

Through our religious profession we offer ourselves to God in order to follow CHRIST and work with him in building up the Kingdom. Our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers.

Our mission sets the tenor of our whole life; it specifies the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families.

(Constitution 3)

CHAPTER ONE

SALESIAN FORMATION IN THE PRESENT-DAY CIRCUMSTANCES. THE RATIO

1.1 VOCATION AND FORMATION: A GIFT TO BE WELCOMED AND FOSTERED

1. *The Salesian vocation* is a gift of God rooted in baptism. It is a call to become, like Don Bosco, disciples of Christ and to form communities bearing witness to the Good Shepherd's love for the young. "*We respond to this call* by committing ourselves to an adequate ongoing formation, for which the Lord daily gives us his grace."¹ By responding faithfully to his vocation each Salesian finds his path to complete fulfilment in Christ and his way to holiness.²

"Jesus called his Apostles individually to be with him, and to be sent forth to preach the Gospel. Patiently and lovingly he prepared them and gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into the fullness of Truth. *He calls us too* to live out in the Church our Founder's project as apostles of the young."³

What the first disciples experienced in their encounter with Jesus and the road they trod as they shared his life, accepted the mystery of his person, embraced the cause of his Kingdom and espoused the evangelical style of life he proposed are also the experience of every Salesian and the path he follows.

Formation is the joyful acceptance of the gift of one's vocation and its actualization at every moment of one's life and in every situation. Formation is a grace of the Spirit, a personal attitude, an education for life.

1.2 WITH OUR GAZE ON DON BOSCO, FOUNDER AND EDUCATOR, AND ON THE REALITY OF THE CONGREGATION

2. *Don Bosco was a true disciple of Christ.* He was deeply a "man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and living as seeing him who is invisible".⁴ Zeal for the Kingdom, service of the Church, and response to the needs of the times – these were the typical features of his life, in which he perceived the presence and support of Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians.

Young people and their salvation were his vocation, his mission and his constant field of vision. For their sake the Spirit bestowed on him the heart of a father and teacher, capable of total

¹ C 96.

² Cfr. C 2.22.

³ C 96.

⁴ C 21.

self-giving: “I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys.”⁵ In his *predilection for the young*, especially the poorest among them, in his concern for the working-classes and in his missionary undertaking he found his life’s identity.

Don Bosco lived this vocation joyfully, aware that the gift he had received was *to be communicated to others*. He was able at every moment to evoke participation and sharing in responsibility.⁶ Many people shared his spirit and his mission, living them out in a wide range of vocations. In this way, the Salesian charism became from its beginning a community, a family, a movement.⁷

Don Bosco the Founder *wanted a community of consecrated persons at the centre of his work*, persons who would dedicate their lives entirely as educators and missionaries of the young, especially the poorest, living in fraternal and apostolic communities, and following Jesus in his obedience, poverty and chastity.⁸ Inspired by the goodness and zeal of St. Francis de Sales, Don Bosco called them Salesians.⁹

3. Conscious of his responsibility for the charism the Lord had entrusted to him, Don Bosco *devoted himself to the formation of his first sons as his priority*. “One cannot think of Don Bosco as a founder without at the same time thinking of him as a educator.”¹⁰

Formation was his “constant preoccupation and greatest endeavour, from the time of the Oratory when he chose from among his boys those who gave hope of eventually remaining with him, until the last years of his life when his insistent recommendation to Rectors, Provincials and missionaries was to work earnestly for vocations and their formation.”¹¹ He did not limit himself to the search for collaborators, but invited them to become to some extent both disciples and teachers at the same time, “founders” of a new Congregation together with him.¹²

4. “The first Salesians,” our Constitutions say, “found their sure guide in Don Bosco. Living at the very heart of his community in action, they learned to model their own lives on his.”¹³

“Fathering a charism”¹⁴ which he lived in the style of the Preventive System, Don Bosco was led:

- to impart to his spiritual sons the fire of his “*da mihi animas*”, an enthusiasm for the mission among the young and an interior joy born of a total dedication, in work and sacrifice, to the cause of the Kingdom;

- to offer them an environment rich in values and relationships, built upon mutual confidence and inner freedom;

- to accompany them individually by educating them to a simple but deep experience of God, by offering them a maturing process incarnated in their daily lives, by opening up vast horizons before them, and by making them responsible for his apostolic project.

In fostering vocations and in the long-drawn-out work of forming his own disciples, he was at one and the same time demanding as well as patient, firm as well as flexible.

⁵ Cfr. C 1.

⁶ Cfr GC24 71.

⁷ Cfr. GC24 48-49.

⁸ Cfr. GC24 149-150.

⁹ Cfr. C 4.

¹⁰ ISM 359.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cfr. GC23 159, DSM 23.

¹³ C 97.

¹⁴ DSM 23.

Salesian formation means identifying oneself with the vocation which the Spirit has raised up through Don Bosco, possessing his ability to share it with others, and drawing inspiration from his attitude and method of formation.

5. *The Salesian Congregation* is the bearer of an original experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church, one that was lived by Don Bosco; it is a creative continuation of his project and his spirit in history.¹⁵ Right from its origins until the present-day it has lived and fostered that experience with affection and constant fidelity, and has made an effort to communicate it in different ways, especially by caring for vocations and engaging in the work of formation. In the postconciliar period it has made a particularly intense effort to be faithful and to renew itself; evidence of this have been the process of reformulating the Constitutions and the reflections and guidelines of the General Chapters.

Today the Congregation is universal in its appearance and in its roots. The Holy Spirit has given its charism the capacity to bear fruit for the good of young people and continues to raise up persons who wish to “stay with Don Bosco” and live out the Salesian mission in religious consecrated life. The Congregation is present all over the world, inserted in a great variety of human, cultural, religious and pastoral contexts; there it faces different situations: starting up or refounding, consolidating or expanding, redimensioning or relocating. Different too are the contexts in which vocations emerge and develop, and variable their number, background and depth.

When speaking of Salesian formation therefore we have to take into account the reality of *a single vocation lived out in different ways at world level*; we have to consider this particular “Don Bosco in the world” – gratefully, responsibly and realistically.

In this way the Salesian vocation appears as an identity in constant evolution: while remaining the same, it renews itself in creative fidelity and incarnates itself continually. Growing in Don Bosco’s charism and striving to be faithful to it: this is formation, and it is an absolutely basic priority for the Congregation today and for every Salesian, just as it was for Don Bosco himself in his early days.

1.3 REFERENCE POINTS FOR FORMATION AT THE PRESENT DAY

6. To achieve its objectives, formation today needs to focus on certain points. It must understand the context within which a vocation develops, be in tune with the Church and docile to her guidance, feel with the Congregation’s experience of the Salesian charism and adhere to the pattern of formation it proposes.

1.3.1 Understanding the context: key influences and challenges

Each one’s experience of his vocation and formation is marked by the human and historical context to which he belongs and within which he has to operate; it is a “*contextualized*” experience.¹⁶ The setting and the needs of inculturation and evangelization make demands of every form of religious life and apostolic mission and have a deep effect on them. The different cultural

¹⁵ Cfr. MuR 11.

¹⁶ Cfr. MuR 11.

contexts bring key influences and challenges to bear on the concept and development of the person and his formation.

Faced with this taxing and ambivalent reality, it becomes imperative to engage in a work of discernment and to be able to *respond with the help of a proper pedagogical strategy*. It becomes the responsibility of every confrere and the specific duty of those involved in the animation and formation of vocations to understand the various contexts and the questions they raise, and to grasp the requirements demanded of whoever wishes to live his vocation. Creating a suitable formative experience requires close consideration to be given to one's context.

This is all the more necessary in a situation which is complex, fragmented and in constant flux, and for a Congregation which is becoming ever more universal and pluricultural.

7. At the level of the Church and the Congregation, there are overall views of the existing reality and shrewd interpretations of some particular situations. We mention this here in order to lay stress on *the constant concern for formation* which should permeate the Congregation at world level, and in their different contexts the Provinces, as well as those responsible for formation: it is a matter of carefully considering and duly discerning situations in relation to initial and ongoing formation.

The objectives and the methodology of formation must be constantly attuned to a pastoral reading of cultural situations, and those in charge of formation must become capable of a dialogue which takes account of both elements.¹⁷

Aware that a single presentation is not possible because of the variety of situations, we shall draw attention to some of the challenges that are emerging in the different contexts and closely affecting the experience of vocation.

- The unique and sacred dignity of the human person is universally recognized today, but we come across situations in which an exaggerated exaltation of the individual leads to subjectivism and individualism.

- There is a growing awareness of the dignity of the woman and her role in building the new society, but in many places she is still manipulated and exploited in various ways; hence the ambiguous treatment she receives.

- A strong emphasis is laid today on the aspect of sexuality, but all too often in an ambiguous or distorted manner; there is a need therefore for sound and mature personalities.

- Pluralism is already a widespread reality in many places. It can turn into an enrichment, but it requires people who have a strong sense of identity and are able to make mature decisions; otherwise there is a risk of falling into relativism and weak thinking.

- Considerable importance is attached to the value of freedom, and there is a growing awareness that it can be safeguarded only through a well-formed conscience.

- The existing complexity of the world and of life tends towards fragmentation and makes it difficult to lead a well-integrated life.

- The pattern of constant change, the push towards globalization and the insistence of persons and groups on preserving their own identity call for a critical stance and an equilibrium, with a grounding in one's own culture, albeit with due openness.

- In the religious sphere, one notices a greater desire for spirituality and for God, while, on the other hand, there are vast areas in which religious values are increasingly irrelevant and of little consequence in people's lives.

8. This description of both positive and problematic elements resonates deeply in everyone's heart, and particularly affects the formation of those who embrace the vocation to consecrated life,

¹⁷ Cfr. GC24 246.

be they young or not so young. It becomes necessary to ask about *the kind of “youth situation” within which vocations arise today* and the relationship between the criteria and models of life which that situation proposes and the project of Salesian consecrated life. There cannot be a uniform answer to these questions because “youth situations” are so diverse, and those who embark on their first formation bring with them their very different experiences of family, culture, religion, work, study and contact with Salesians; moreover, the paths they have led in following their vocation have differed so widely.

Let us recall a few characteristics that are particularly relevant from the point of view of formation:

- Young people want to be the architects of their own lives, but their horizons are often very limited and they experience difficulty in making decisive choices either for the long term or for life, choices which call for constancy and sacrifice.

- They are sensitive to the values of the human person, but at the same time are fascinated by the consumer society.

- They are apt to defend their freedom, but lacking solid points of reference and affected by rapid changes, they can turn into disoriented personalities, not sufficiently formed and wanting in psychological consistency.

- Particularly in the sphere of sexuality they are influenced by the way people behave in the environments in which they live; the emotional aspect too carries a lot of weight with them.

- They often draw their information, their understanding of reality and their values from the world of social communication. They do not have a strong sense of history, and for this reason they are inclined to give importance to whatever is immediate.

- In their daily relationships they are open, sincere and ready to communicate. They are flexible, tolerant and can easily adapt to new situations. In general they are capable of generosity and service to those in need, and several of them are in the volunteer movements; however, these positive experiences need to be integrated with their life, lest they remain a parenthesis.

- While the educative and evangelizing impact of the family and the school is on the wane, the complexity of modern times makes it difficult to forge unity in one’s life and prolongs the process of growing to maturity and personal identity.

- Young people are sensitive to religion. They search for God and for the values which can give meaning to their lives. They feel the need for spirituality and prayer, but they do not always find it easy to follow the trends in society and at the same time interiorize their own relationship with God.

1.3.2 The experience and the guidelines of the Church

9. Aware of the challenges of the present time and faithful to the renewal ushered in by the Council, the Church has been *decisively studying the various forms the baptismal vocation can take*, and has been showing how the different specific vocations integrate with and enrich each other in an ecclesiology of communion.

In this context the Church has:

- fostered a renewed awareness of *the vocation of the laity* and has invited everyone to aim at a better quality of Christian life, one that is more solid, personalized, and capable of entering into dialogue with culture;¹⁸

¹⁸ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, 1988 (Synod 1987).

- given a deeper understanding of consecrated life and its place in the Church, asking that it be lived in authenticity and fidelity to one's charism and as a sorely needed prophetic witness in the world of today;¹⁹

- reflected anew on the ministry of priests, highlighting their service to the People of God and their need to improve relationships and communication in their pastoral work.²⁰

The Church has given prominence to the witnessing and apostolic aspect of the Christian vocation. She wants everyone to be involved in the commitment to the new evangelization, in the renewed missionary thrust and in the dialogue between faith and culture. Actively inserted in situations of cultural and religious pluralism in the different social contexts, she offers deeper insights into the motivations and manner of inculturating the faith, of opening up to ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, of expressing solidarity with the world, and in particular, of promoting justice and peace.

10. For the Church a formation that is of high quality and relevant to the times is the key to renewal and the vitality of vocations. While proposing it as a strategic priority and a constant commitment, the Church draws attention to the importance of certain elements: a clear identity with regard to vocation and charism, a formation that is personal and at the same time shared with others, a programme of formation that takes account of the characteristics of the new candidates and the rapidly evolving human and cultural context, and an ongoing formation that keeps alive one's enthusiasm and fidelity in regard to one's vocation.

Several recent documents offer criteria, guidelines and instructions for formation. Among them are the following: *Vita consecrata*,²¹ *Potissimum institutioni* (Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes),²² Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation,²³ *Pastores dabo vobis*,²⁴ *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Basic Programme of Priestly Formation),²⁵ and Directives on the Preparation of Educators for Seminaries.²⁶

1.3.3 The experience and the guidelines of the Congregation

11. *The Congregation has had to react* to the rapid cultural changes, to the world of the young, to the exhortations of the Church and to its own situation in the world. The path it has taken in recent decades testifies to the strenuous efforts it has made for a renewed understanding of its charism, for a relaunching of its mission, and its openness to renewal.

Some aspects of vocation have been the object of *new emphases*: from the meaning of apostolic consecration to a renewed understanding of the Preventive System, from a felt need for spirituality to a community experience, from a basic culture to ongoing formation, from an awareness of the specificity of vocations to their complementary and reciprocal relationships within

¹⁹ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World, 1996 (Synod 1994).

²⁰ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day, 1992 (Synod 1990).

²¹ Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, Rome: 25 March 1996.

²² Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life, 1990.

²³ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life, 1999.

²⁴ Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, Rome: 25 March 1992.

²⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, 1985.

²⁶ Congregation for Catholic Education, 1993.

the Salesian Family, from an ability to draw in lay people to the animating role of Salesians in the educative and pastoral community.

New challenges are arising from the situation of our communities, from the new working model²⁷ and the new relationship with lay people, from a stronger sense of togetherness in the Salesian Family, from the new frontiers of our mission and the new situations of poverty, and from the need to convey a message through our works.

12. Each Salesian is called to *respond to these challenges*, and the Congregation is strongly urged to provide for a genuine and renewed Salesian experience as well as a formation that helps the confreres and the communities to be:

- bearers of a clear Salesian identity and a high quality spiritual and apostolic experience;
- clearly identified by the grace of unity, in imitation of Don Bosco, who achieved “a splendid blending of nature and grace”;²⁸
- able to discern situations and react positively, and consequently to be creative in the pastoral field and launch significant projects for the benefit of young people;
- conscious of their role as an animating nucleus within a network of shared responsibility with lay people, which is the educative and pastoral community;
- aware that the Salesian vocation is a vocation open to sharing its mission and charism with a spiritual Family and a Movement which take their inspiration from Don Bosco, Father and Teacher.

All this requires that we flesh out a practical plan of action to form Salesians for the Church and the world of today.

13. The text of the *Constitutions*, officially approved by the Church, is the sure foundation on which to trace the path of fidelity to our vocation and to organise the work of formation.

It falls to *the General Chapter and the Rector Major* to exercise their responsibility and competence in ensuring unity of spirit; they offer the proper means to look after, safeguard and develop the charism, and propose particular normative guidelines to ensure that the formation of the members is able to meet the demands of the common vocation.

On the basis of the indications given by the Constitutions, the General Chapters, and the Rector Majors, the Congregation has produced *other documents* that serve to deepen the Salesian experience and show how to cultivate it. These are, for example, the commentary on the Constitutions²⁹ and texts concerning our educative and pastoral praxis, the part we have to play within the Salesian Family, and the exercise of authority by the Provincial and the Rector.³⁰

Among the official texts, the *Ratio* (“**The Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco**”) is a document of unique importance. It shows how to pass on the charism of Don Bosco “so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations, in different cultures and geographical regions,” and it also explains to Salesians “how to live that spirit in the different stages of life on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ.”³¹

²⁷ Cfr GC24 39.

²⁸ C 21.

²⁹ The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A Guide to the Salesian Constitutions, Rome 1986.

³⁰ Cfr. Appendix 4 below for some significant documents on formation.

³¹ VC 68.

1.4 THE *RATIO*: PURPOSE, CONTENT AND THOSE TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED

1.4.1 The purpose of the *Ratio*

14. “The principle of unity in the Congregation,” our Constitutions say, “is the charism of our Founder, which of its richness gives rise to different ways of living the one Salesian vocation. Formation is therefore *one in its essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions*; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures.”³²

From this standpoint the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum* is an instrument for forging vocational identity and a particular service for unifying and decentralizing formation. It “sets out in an organic and instructive way *the complexus of principles and norms concerning formation* which are found in the Constitutions, general Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation”;³³ it contains the guidelines and general norms that must guide the Provinces in laying down how the work of formation is to be carried out, keeping in mind the demands of the cultural context.

The *Ratio* is a practical and secure guide that aims at expressing the ideals that Don Bosco has left us as his legacy. It gives *practical norms* and presents a synthesis of the conditions, the pedagogical methods and the processes that ought to characterize formation at world level.³⁴ In it is to be found the basis of unity for every legitimate pluralism in the manner of conducting the work of formation and the programme of studies.

15. It was the GC21 which required that the Salesian *Ratio* be drawn up. The first edition was published in 1981; the second was prepared in 1985 after the Code of Canon Law was published and the renewed text of the Salesian Constitutions was definitively approved. *The present revision* was asked for by the GC24³⁵ in the light of the new challenges of evangelization and inculturation, and in response to the renewed commitment to formation that emerged very strongly from the analysis of the state of the Congregation and from the deeper study of the theme of the Chapter.³⁶

1.4.2 The structure and content of the *Ratio*

16. The *Ratio* is *made up of two parts*, followed by four Appendices.

The first part opens with a chapter that highlights some aspects of Salesian formation in the circumstances of the present-day and declares the purpose of the *Ratio* (chap. 1). There follows a presentation of our Salesian vocational identity: the starting point and goal of our formation (chap. 2), the dimensions of our formation together with a description of certain values and attitudes required by our Salesian vocation (chap. 3), and some strategies for a methodology of formation (chap. 4).

The second part concentrates on the formative process seen from the standpoint of ongoing formation. After an introduction which outlines the characteristics of the formative process (chap.

³² C 100.

³³ R 87.

³⁴ Cfr. VC 68.

³⁵ GC24 147.

³⁶ Cfr. GC24 244.

5), the various periods or phases of initial formation right up to perpetual profession are presented one by one, and for each of them are spelled out the nature and the purpose, the particular characteristics and a few necessary conditions (chap. 6 – 11). The final chapter deals with ongoing formation (chap. 12).

Four *Appendices* complete the document. Two of them offer suggestions for drawing up the Formation section of the Province Directory and the Provincial Formation Plan. A third contains guidelines for the programme of studies. And a fourth presents some significant documents on formation.

1.4.3 Those to whom the *Ratio* is directed

17. The *Ratio* is a text *entrusted to all Salesians*. In it they will find the solicitude of the Congregation for the holiness and training of its members. In particular, the confreres in formation will find in it an invitation and a motivation to grow personally in identifying with their Salesian vocation and to embrace their commitments with complete awareness.

In a special way, the *Ratio* is entrusted to *the Provinces* and directly concerns the Provincial and his Council, the Rectors of communities, the Provincial Delegate and Commission for Formation, those holding responsibility for formation, and all those who are animators of vocations and of initial and ongoing formation.

In line with the principles and the general criteria set out in the *Ratio*, *every Province has the duty* of laying down, through the various organs of animation and government, “the method of formation according to the needs of its own cultural context and in conformity with the directives of the Church and the Congregation”.³⁷ This responsibility requires a permanent attitude of reflection and dialogue between Salesian identity and the cultural context. Collaboration in this field is to be encouraged among Provinces that are in similar circumstances.

18. For a Province, which is the community responsible for inculturating the Salesian charism, accepting the spirit and the mind of the *Ratio* means establishing a formation climate and mentality at the level of the Province, a service of animation and government which accords real priority to the care of vocations, and *a group of confreres* – normally the Provincial Delegate for Formation and the Provincial Commission for Formation – who have a real capacity for reflecting, evaluating and putting forward suggestions for consideration. Such a group, acting in dependence on the Provincial and his Council, will be responsible for animating and coordinating the formation enterprise at the various levels.

The Province will express its responsibility in connection with the *Ratio* by drawing up:

- *the formation section of the Provincial Directory*, in which it will transpose the policies and requirements of the *Ratio* in precise norms, applying them to the local situation;³⁸

- *the Provincial Formation Plan*, a plan of initial and ongoing formation that contains objectives, urgent needs, priorities and a concrete course of action – in line with the *Ratio* – that are fixed after, and based on, an attentive and up-to-date assessment of the situation of formation. The plan makes for a formation process that is gradual and organic, permits a verification and a constant adaptation to situations, and helps to keep improvisation and immediate concerns at bay.³⁹

³⁷ C 101; cfr. ISM 363.

³⁸ Cfr. R 87; ISM 365.

³⁹ Cfr. ISM 366.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

19. *“The principle of unity in the Congregation is the charism of our Founder, which of its richness gives rise to different ways of living the one Salesian vocation. **Formation** is therefore **one** in its essential content **and diversified** in its concrete expressions; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures.”*⁴⁰

*Pluralism in the manner of effecting Salesian formation in line with the needs of a particular cultural context*⁴¹ *requires that the charism be the basis of unity.*

20. *“**At world level the practical guide** for formation will be the Salesian ‘Ratio fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum’, and at provincial level a Directory approved by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council.*

*“**The Ratio** sets out in an organic and instructive way the complexus of principles and norms concerning formation which are found in the Constitutions, general Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation.”*⁴²

The Ratio is a document at the service of the unity and decentralization of formation in the Congregation. It therefore gives directions, and is normative in its practical indications, wherever they are found. It must serve as a basis for the formation section of the Provincial Directory, for the programme of studies and for the Provincial Formation Plan.

21. *Let the Provincial and the Provincial Delegate for Formation see to it that all the confreres are acquainted with the Ratio and the booklet “Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment. Admissions”. These two documents should become a constant point of reference for those who, by virtue of their different roles, hold responsibility in the formation and vocation sector (the Provincial Council and the animators, the Rectors, those involved in the work of formation, the confessors, etc.).*

22. *It is the prime responsibility of the Provincial and his Council to animate the work of formation. **Every Province must ensure** that formation is carried out in an **organic, systematic and coordinated manner** as a service that is mindful of the different situations, reflects, plans and evaluates.*

Ordinarily, this service will be undertaken by the Provincial Delegate and the Provincial Commission for Formation, in agreement with and under the responsibility of the Provincial and his Council.

23. *“It is the duty of the provincial community, through the various organs of animation and government, to lay down the method of formation according to the needs of its own cultural context and in conformity with the directives of the Church and the Congregation.”*⁴³

*The **formation section of the Provincial Directory**, formulated by the Provincial Chapter⁴⁴ and approved by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council, “applies the principles and norms of Salesian formation [set out in the Ratio] to the concrete local situations.”*⁴⁵

⁴⁰ C 100.

⁴¹ Cfr. C 101.

⁴² R 87.

⁴³ C 101.

⁴⁴ Cfr. C 171, 4.

⁴⁵ R 87.

Let every Province evaluate on a regular basis – normally through the Provincial Commission for Formation, or if considered opportune, in line with its proper function, through the Provincial Chapter – the practical implementation of the formation section of the Provincial Directory. This information will be sent by the Provincial to the Councillor for Formation.

24. *In conformity with the Provincial Directory, let the Provincial see to the formulation of the **Provincial Formation Plan** as an operational blueprint in the field of initial and ongoing formation. The plan should contain criteria, objectives, strategies, and lines of action. It should provide for a sharing of responsibility and a gradual approach at the working level, and lay down the modalities for verification. It ought to be the fruit of a community reflection on the formation guidelines of the Church and the Congregation.*

CHAPTER TWO

THE STARTING-POINT AND GOAL OF OUR FORMATION: OUR IDENTITY AS SALESIANS

25. “Our living Rule is Jesus Christ... whom we find present in Don Bosco who devoted his life to the young.”¹ This statement of our Constitutions *sums up our Salesian vocation: we are to conform ourselves to Jesus Christ and spend our lives for the young, as did Don Bosco*. All our formation, both initial and ongoing, consists in acquiring and actualizing this identity in individual persons and in the community. To this end are directed the efforts of every candidate and every confrere, the activity of the animators, and the entire formation enterprise.

For this reason, our Salesian identity is the basis of unity and of belonging to the worldwide Congregation. It is *the heart of all our formation*, the fountainhead of our formation process and its constant point of reference. It is also the determining criterion of vocation discernment.

2.1 OUR IDENTITY AS SALESIANS

26. Don Bosco the Founder, “a man of God and a man of young people”, a man of the Church and a man of his times, the animator of a way of apostolic spirituality, is for us Salesians not only someone to constantly refer to but also our pattern of life. We find the authentic way of living our Salesian identity in Don Bosco’s own experience of his vocation and in that of the first community of Valdocco. In our Constitutions, approved by the Church, we have its most authoritative formulation, expressing the Congregation’s awareness of its own charism.

*In Don Bosco and the Salesian Constitutions we find the elements which define that “original style of life and action”² which the Holy Spirit raised up in the Church, that “specific form of religious life”³ in which “we find our own way to holiness”.⁴ By calling us *Salesians*, Don Bosco wanted to emphasize our spiritual and pastoral closeness to Francis de Sales, a saint whose goodness and pastoral zeal he admired.⁵*

What was true for Don Bosco is true for every Salesian: when the living out of one’s vocation is identified with one’s actual journey through life, it becomes the place of encounter between God’s initiative and human endeavour.⁶ And again, for Don Bosco as well as for every Salesian, one’s personal vocation is closely linked with that of the community, itself the bearer of the charism and responsible for the mission.

2.1.1 A project of apostolic consecrated life

¹ C 196.

² C 10

³ C 2.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cfr. C 4.9.

⁶ Cfr. C 1.

27. The Constitutions state that the Salesian vocation is a particular expression of the baptismal vocation, which religious profession recalls and endorses, “giving it a deeper and fuller expression”.⁷

The hallmark of the life of a Salesian as a disciple of the Lord is his **apostolic consecration**. It is a grace of the Father, who consecrates him with the gift of his Spirit, engrafts him in Christ, and in the Church entrusts him with building his Kingdom by being a sign and bearer of his love for the young, especially the poorest.⁸

In the act of *religious profession* our apostolic consecration finds its most eloquent expression. It is “a sign of a loving encounter between the Lord who calls and the disciple who responds by giving himself totally to God and to his brothers and sisters.”⁹

28. While this gift of the Spirit - the Salesian charism – effects a particular configuration to Christ, it creates a distinct Gospel awareness that *permeates a Salesian’s entire life*, his style of holiness and the accomplishment of the mission:¹⁰

- *it distinguishes his encounter with God*: his relationship with the Father, whose fatherhood and compassion he experiences every day; with the Son, Apostle of the Father and Good Shepherd, whom he seeks to identify with more and more; and with the Holy Spirit, from whom he draws grace to be holy and strength to be faithful;

- *it marks his relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church*: he loves her, feels himself a living part of her, and works assiduously for her growth;¹¹

- *it gives prominence to some particular aspects in the sphere of asceticism*, aspects that we can define in the following key-words: work, temperance, loving-kindness, educational expertise, and fraternal rapport;¹²

- *it gives a certain Marian tone to his life*, drawing him into a relationship with Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, who epitomises his spirituality and gives him support in his vocation. He contemplates her as the Lord’s disciple who said “Yes” to God’s plan of the Incarnation, and follows her as she cooperates in the work of redemption and symbolizes the Church;

- *it determines his outlook on the world about him and the part he is to play in it.*

29. The Salesian follows Christ by realizing *Don Bosco’s apostolic plan*.¹³

“With one and the same call Christ invites us to follow him in his work of salvation and in the kind of virginal and poor life that he chose for himself; and we, in a single response of love and the grace of the Holy Spirit, following the example of the apostles, willingly leave everything and join together in community, the better to work for him and for the Kingdom. *The consecration of Salesians is therefore one and undivided*: it is inseparably apostolic and religious.”¹⁴

The Salesian therefore devotes himself totally to God, whom he loves above all things, and to his plan of salvation. His life starts from a deep experience of God and the challenges involved in carrying out the mission.¹⁵ *He is consecrated for the mission which sets the tenor of his life.*¹⁶ God’s

⁷ C 23

⁸ Cfr. C 3; VECCHI J., “The Father consecrates and sends us,” AGC 365 (1998)

⁹ C 23.

¹⁰ Cfr. C 10-11.

¹¹ Cfr. C 13.

¹² Cfr. AGC 357, p. 17-18.

¹³ Cfr. C 96.

¹⁴ The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 107.

¹⁵ Cfr. GC24 152; VC 73.

¹⁶ Cfr. C 3.

call reaches him as he lives out his mission among the young; that is often the place where he begins to follow Christ. In the mission are exercised, revealed and developed the gifts he has received at his consecration. A single movement of love draws him to God and directs him towards the young.¹⁷ He turns his educational activity among the young into an act of worship and a potential meeting-place with God.

It is in “the grace of unity”¹⁸ that the essential elements of the Salesian “project” of apostolic consecrated life are fused together.

2.1.1.1 ANIMATED BY PASTORAL LOVE TO BE AN EDUCATOR AND PASTOR OF THE YOUNG

30. What distinguishes the life of the Salesian, as well as that of Don Bosco, is *the predilection for the young*, and among them, the preference for those who are “poor, abandoned and in danger”.¹⁹ The service to the young gives unity to his whole life: “That you are young is enough to make me love you very much.”²⁰ “For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life.”²¹

The predilection for young people and the accompanying gift of oneself to them – the distinguishing features of Don Bosco and of every Salesian – flow from **pastoral love**, that is, from a “special communion of love with Christ”,²² and not just from the concern of an educator or the generous heart of someone sensitive to their needs.

In pastoral love, the love for Christ as the Good Shepherd and for young people, the Salesian finds his programme of life, his way to holiness, the embodiment of his covenant with God and of his will to become conformed to Christ. It is through the young that the Lord enters to take first place in the life of the Salesian, and the yearnings of Christ the Redeemer find an echo in his motto, *Da mihi animas, coetera tolle*, which forms the unifying element of his whole life.

31. In Don Bosco pastoral love assumes a further specification as *educative love*. It manifests itself as a tangible, personalized love concerned with the integral salvation of young people. To some it offers bread, to others trade skills and cultural advancement; to everyone it provides a path that opens them to truth, urges them to develop in themselves a responsible freedom, and leads them to an encounter with the risen Jesus.

As he works with the *Oratory as his model*, the Salesian responds to the needs of the young by embarking on a vast array of activities and works, each of which is “a home”, “a school”, “a parish” and “a playground”.²³ His generous and creative spirit in the name of the Gospel is his way of being Church and translates into youth projects significant for both Church and society.

32. Moreover, his “apostolic passion, lit up by youthful ardour”²⁴ gives a particular tone to his service of youth: called “*the oratorian heart*”, it reveals itself in a method which Don Bosco named

¹⁷ Cfr. C 10.

¹⁸ SGC 127.

¹⁹ C 26; cfr. SGC 47; GC19 p. 101.

²⁰ BOSCO G., *Il Giovane Provveduto*, cfr. *Opere Edite* II, LAS Rome, p. 187.

²¹ C 14.

²² VC 15.

²³ Cfr. C 40.

²⁴ SGC 89.

the **Preventive System**, and which is based on reason, religion and loving-kindness.²⁵ Drawing inspiration from the example and teachings of Don Bosco, the Salesian lives the Preventive System as a spiritual, pedagogical and pastoral experience.²⁶ His dealings with the young are marked by cordiality and by an active and friendly presence²⁷ that fosters leadership. He joyfully accepts the labours and sacrifices that his contact with young people implies, convinced that through them he will find his way to holiness.

This priority commitment to young people fits in well with *pastoral work among the working-classes*²⁸ (faith-education of the ordinary people, particularly by *means of social communication*²⁹) and missionary activity by proclaiming the Gospel message among peoples it has not yet reached.³⁰

2.1.1.2 RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF A COMMUNITY

33. By his vocation the Salesian is a living part of a local, provincial and world **community** and nurtures a deep sense of belonging to each of them. He lives the two aspects of that vocation – the personal and the community aspects – in his brotherly fellowship, in the realization of his mission and in his spirituality.

Don Bosco was not one to work all alone by himself; he sought the involvement of others and fostered collaboration and the sharing of responsibility. He was clearly aware that his vocation was meant to be shared and passed on to others.

The community aspect is therefore one of the most distinguishing marks of Salesian identity. The Salesian is called to live with brothers who are consecrated like him in order to work together with them for God's Kingdom among the young. "To live and work together," our Constitutions say, "is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation."³¹

In a spirit of faith and with friendly support the Salesian lives the *family spirit* in his community, contributing day by day to the growth of communion among all the members.

Convinced that the *mission* is entrusted to the community, he commits himself to work together with his confreres according to an overall plan and a joint strategy.

In his *community prayer* he rejoices in the presence of the Lord and shares his spiritual experience with others.

2.1.1.3 WITNESS TO GOSPEL RADICALISM

34. Prompted by pastoral love and a sense of mission, Don Bosco proposed to his collaborators a pattern of life entirely based on Gospel values that would demonstrate an active solidarity with the young and testify to God's supremacy, *bringing to bear on the world of education their radical*

²⁵ Cfr. C 38.

²⁶ Cfr. C 20.

²⁷ Cfr. C 39.

²⁸ Cfr. C 29.

²⁹ Cfr. C 6.

³⁰ Cfr. C 30.

³¹ C 49.

witness to the values of the Kingdom.³² He “frequently [pointed] out how the sincere practice of the vows strengthens the bonds of brotherly love and makes our apostolic work coherent.”³³

The way of life according to **the counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity** is grounded on a love for Christ and for young people. With the groundwork of a solid human maturity for its foundation, and its sustenance deriving from life in community and personal aseciticism, it bears witness that the need to love, the urge to possess and the freedom to control one’s whole life, aspects which touch on the deepest inclinations of human nature, find their fullest meaning in Christ the Saviour.³⁴ It is an experience rich in evangelical and human values.

The practice of the evangelical counsels manifests in a particular way the “*Da mihi animas, coetera tolle*”, the hallmark of the Salesian’s apostolic spirituality and asceticism; it is his badge of identity and test of formation.

2.1.1.4 ANIMATOR OF COMMUNION IN THE SPIRIT AND MISSION OF DON BOSCO

35. “Every SDB is an animator, and strives always to fulfil the task more efficiently.”³⁵

Don Bosco’s vocation developed in such a way that it became *a shared vocation, a joint mission, an experience of holiness in a communion of gifts*. From the beginning of the Oratory there were secular priests and lay people, men and women, taking part in his apostolate in a family environment and having the same spirit and goals. Still others felt they were a part of the Oratory and gave a helping hand in different ways in the work for the young.

In this way Don Bosco’s apostolic drive became the common undertaking of those who joined in his enterprises. His zeal for souls, his style of approach to the young, his method of education and his spirituality became the patrimony of a Family and of a vast Movement.

The Salesian cannot fully think about his vocation in the Church without reference to those who with him share in carrying out the Founder’s will.³⁶ Through his profession he enters the Salesian Congregation and becomes part of the *Salesian Family* in which, together with the other members who are called to pursue different vocations, he shares the spirit and mission proper to Don Bosco’s charism, and the striving for fidelity through formation in common.³⁷ He takes on the responsibility “to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for [...] mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness”.³⁸

36. In *the educative and pastoral community (EPC)* the Salesian finds practical ways of expressing Salesian communion every day. That is where he shares the Salesian spirit, experiences the interdependence of vocations and roles, and carries out a programme of joint formation. Together with his Salesian community he fulfils his animating role by helping everyone to collaborate and share responsibility.

But the circle of communion goes beyond Salesian works. It takes in the wider area and the local Church, and above all *embraces a vast movement of persons* who are attracted by the charism and spirituality of Don Bosco or who work for the young.

³² Cfr. VC 96; GC24 152.

³³ C 61.

³⁴ Cfr. C 62.

³⁵ GC24 159.

³⁶ Cfr. SGC 151.

³⁷ Cfr. GC24 142.

³⁸ C 5.

2.1.1.5 *A PART OF THE CHURCH, OPEN TO THE FLOW OF EVENTS AND IN TOUCH WITH REALITY*

37. In openness to the working of the Spirit, Don Bosco successfully interpreted the signs of the times and responded to new needs in a wise, creative and practical manner.³⁹ The contact with reality was woven into the fabric of his vocation. He experienced firsthand the life of the Church and the history of his country. He grasped their complex reality and played an active role in them. The flow of events was for him a challenge and an urgent summons to discernment and action. “I have always gone along [...], just as the Lord inspired me and circumstances required.”⁴⁰

Receptive to every situation, the Salesian is particularly responsive to the condition of the young, of working-class people and of those still awaiting the Gospel message; he feels invested with a responsibility towards them by virtue of the Salesian charism.⁴¹

He tries to understand the cultural developments taking place in everyday life, reflects seriously on them, considers them in the light of Redemption, the urgency of the “*Da mihi animas*” and “the coming of the Kingdom”,⁴² and feels constantly challenged to produce bold, new, practical responses.

By keeping in touch with reality he is impelled to grow in his identity as a Salesian out of dynamic fidelity to Don Bosco and to the times.

2.1.2 **The different forms of Salesian identity**

38. Don Bosco wanted the single project of Salesian apostolic consecration to be expressed in its entirety in the two forms proper to it: in that of the Salesian priest [or deacon] and in that of the Salesian brother. Both live out the same profession and take part in one and the same community of life and action.

The vocations of the Salesian priest [or deacon] and the Salesian brother are two complementary forms that enrich fraternal and apostolic life, bringing to it their specific contribution.⁴³

2.1.2.1 *THE SALESIAN PRIEST*

39. The Salesian priest [or deacon] combines in himself the gifts of Salesian consecration and those of the pastoral ministry, but in such a way that *his particular manner of being a priest and exercising his ministry stems from his Salesian consecration*. As a sacramental sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, from whom he draws his pastoral love, he works within the framework of his community in his bid to “save” the young.

His specific contribution to the apostolic activity of his community lies in his threefold ministry.

³⁹ Cfr. VC 9.

⁴⁰ BM VI, 209.

⁴¹ Cfr. ISM 15-17.

⁴² C 11.

⁴³ Cfr. C 45.

Through *the ministry of the Word*, he brings Christ's message to bear on a variety of situations and expresses it in different ways: by preaching, by helping and giving advice, by enabling the young to understand their own experience, by giving a sense of direction to activities and works, and by effecting a change of life.

He accomplishes his *service of sanctification* in different ways, but the most significant and fruitful occasion is the service of initiation into the life of Christ, into liturgical prayer and into the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

His activity of "*animating the Christian community*" is wholly directed to the service of unity in the Salesian community, and on a wider level, in the educative and pastoral community, in the Salesian Family and in the Salesian Movement. He knows how to animate different Salesian pastoral settings.

2.1.2.2 THE SALESIAN BROTHER⁴⁴

40. The Salesian brother "*combines in himself the gifts of consecration with those of the lay state*":⁴⁵ he lives the lay state as a consecrated person.

He works mainly in the secular field, where he bears witness to his radical love for Christ and is conspicuous for his professional competence.

"The presence of the Salesian brother enriches the apostolic activity of the community. It reminds the priest members of the values inherent in the lay religious vocation and recalls them constantly to an active collaboration with lay people. It also recalls to the Salesian priest the vision of an apostolic goal and ideal that is complex in its reality, because it goes beyond priestly and catechetical activity in the strict sense."⁴⁶

He has a significant role to play, especially in certain contexts where the priest is seen as a sacred or cultic figure. By his consecrated life he proclaims the presence of God in daily life, the importance of becoming disciples before being teachers, and bears witness to a convinced life of faith not tied to functional or ministerial duties.⁴⁷

The Salesian brother also acts as a link between his consecrated brothers and the lay people in the educative and pastoral community itself.

"To his consecrated brethren he recalls the value of creation and of secular realities; to the laity he recalls the value of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity for the world of work, a concern for the locality, and a need for the kind of professional approach he uses in his educative and pastoral activity."⁴⁸

2.2 FORMATION AT THE SERVICE OF SALESIAN IDENTITY

41. The process of growth in one's Salesian identity is the determining factor of the whole approach to formation. In other words, *what distinguishes our formation* - which cannot be generic - *is our Salesian identity*: it spells out the tasks and fundamental requirements.

⁴⁴ For what concerns the vocation and formation of the Salesian Brother, cfr. *The Salesian Brother. History, Identity, Vocational Apostolate and Formation*, Rome 1989.

⁴⁵ GC24 154.

⁴⁶ *The Salesian Brother*, 122.

⁴⁷ Cfr. VECCHI J., "The Father consecrates us and sends us", AGC 365 (1998), p. 41.

⁴⁸ GC24 154.

2.2.1 Our formation is determined by our Salesian identity

The Constitutions assert that “the religious and apostolic nature of the Salesian calling dictates the specific direction our formation must take”.⁴⁹ *To become a consecrated apostle like Don Bosco is the guiding principle of our process of formation.*

It is through formation, in fact, that we achieve our identity as Salesians and acquire the maturity needed to live and work in conformity with the founding charism.⁵⁰ Starting out from an initial state of enthusiasm for Don Bosco and his mission for youth, we arrive at a true conformity with Christ and a stronger identification with our Founder; we embrace the Constitutions as our Rule of life and identity-card, and develop a strong sense of belonging to the Congregation and to the provincial community.

The close relationship between formation and identity “means that each member should study diligently the spirit, history and mission of the Institute to which he or she belongs, in order to advance the personal and communal assimilation of its charism”.⁵¹ It underlines the importance of “Salesianity”, that is, of the spiritual patrimony and the “mind” of the Congregation that need to be progressively studied, assimilated and fostered.

Since the priestly and lay forms are integral aspects of Salesian identity, it is necessary that there be an appropriate formation for growth in one’s specific identity from the very beginning of the process.

2.2.2 Formation promotes our identity on a permanent basis

42. The Salesian vocation is an ever-changing reality. It is a continual response to the Father and consists in following Christ the way Don Bosco did. It calls for a constant openness and discernment in the face of the changes taking place in the life of the Church and the world, especially among youth and the working-classes.

As a process of assimilating one’s identity therefore, *formation is a lifelong task*, a continuing process of being and becoming a Salesian in every phase of one’s life and of living every situation in a Salesian way. It is a response to a vocation that challenges us constantly. It is the responsibility of the Congregation and of each confrere.

In the reality of every day the Salesian turns his identity of apostle of youth into a living experience.

2.2.3 Formation links our identity with the cultural context

43. The Salesian vocation extends to all times and places, expressing itself everywhere and finding ever new and richer ways of being faithful. Called to incarnate himself among the youth of a particular place and culture, the Salesian stands in need of *an incultured formation*.

⁴⁹ C 97.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation*, 7.

⁵¹ VC 71.

Through discernment and dialogue with his own situation, he seeks to imbue his life's principles with evangelical and Salesian values, and to implant the Salesian experience in his own context. This fruitful relationship gives rise to ways of life and pastoral approaches which are more effective in so far as they are consistent with the founding charism and with the unifying action of the Holy Spirit.⁵²

2.2.4 Formation fosters growth in our identity according to our personal gifts

44. The Salesian vocation found its ideal in Don Bosco and its most original historical form in the first community of Valdocco.

There is no doubt that the reality of the Salesian identity is found in different ways in the faces and life-stories of different people, according to the gifts each one has received from God. The communion in fidelity and the different impact of the charism on each person's life can be clearly seen in the history of "Salesian sanctity" and in an intelligent perusal of the experience of those confreres who have lived to the full the Gospel project of Salesian life.

Hence the need for a formation that can communicate the same nucleus of Salesian identity, the same underlying values, the same fundamental characteristics, the same Salesian "culture",⁵³ and that at the same time inspires every confrere to express in his Salesian vocation the gifts he has received and to find in it his way to complete fulfilment in Christ.⁵⁴

As a personal attitude and community responsibility, formation has the permanent task of enabling every confrere to *acquire his own identity as a Salesian and realize it in his own person.*

2.2.5 Formation helps us to live out our identity within a communion of vocations

45. *Formation gives the Salesian a strong sense of his own particular identity, opens him up to communion* in the Salesian spirit and mission with the members of the Salesian Family who live different vocations, and brings him into the broad communion which comprises many varied forms of the Christian vocation. The communion will be the stronger "the clearer each one is about his own identity as a Salesian, and the more the different vocations are understood, respected and benefited from".⁵⁵

Consequently, when initiatives promoting collaboration among the groups of the Salesian Family and with other Institutes in the field of formation, or promoting joint formation between Salesians and lay collaborators are well conducted, they contribute to "a greater appreciation of the charism of one's own Institute as well as that of others..." and offer "an eloquent testimony of the communion to which the Church is called by divine vocation".⁵⁶

Formation to communion in Salesian values increases our awareness of the task of animating in whatever concerns our charism and prepares us for it.

⁵² Cfr. VC 80.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Cfr. C 22.

⁵⁵ GC24 138.

⁵⁶ Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation, 8.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

46. *Salesian identity is the fundamental reference point for initial and ongoing formation. “The religious and apostolic nature of the Salesian calling dictates the specific direction our formation must take, a direction necessary for the life and unity of the Congregation.”*⁵⁷

47. *Called to become like Christ, in the footsteps of Don Bosco, every Salesian must nurture a relationship with our Founder, take the Constitutions as his “book of life”,⁵⁸ keep himself attuned to the Congregation’s understanding of its charism, be acquainted with and follow its guidelines, particularly those of General Chapters and of the Rector Major and his Council, and strengthen his sense of belonging to his Province.*

48. *Particular attention must be given to a personal and community self-examination based on the Constitutions, since they “enshrine the spiritual riches of the traditions of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and define the apostolic project of our Society”.*⁵⁹

49. *In the course of his process of formation, let every Salesian cleric and brother embrace the characteristics of his specific form of vocation.*

Let the animators of the pastoral work for vocations and of formation see to it that the different ways of living the Salesian identity - the Salesian brother, the Salesian priest and the Salesian permanent deacon - are made known and appreciated.

*Let the programmes of initial formation ensure that all confreres have “curricula of equivalent level, with the same phases and similar content and objectives” and let the confreres pay attention to the necessary differences determined by the specific vocation of each, by his personal gifts and inclinations and by the duties of our apostolate.*⁶⁰

50. *Let all the confreres deepen their understanding of the Salesian spirit and acquire a serious and updated knowledge of the history, spirituality and pedagogical and pastoral patrimony proper to our charism.*⁶¹ *Those responsible at the provincial level ought to ensure the necessary conditions and promote suitable initiatives for these studies to be done during initial and ongoing formation.*

51. *Let the Provincial Directory contain the general guidelines required by the Ratio for the study of “Salesianity” during initial formation,⁶² and let the Provincial Formation Plan spell out the contents in the form of a gradual and systematic programme.*

Let each Province or group of Provinces provide for the preparation of experts in “Salesianity”, making use of the services offered by the UPS⁶³ and by other qualified Salesian centres.

⁵⁷ C 97.

⁵⁸ C 196.

⁵⁹ C 192; cfr. VECCHI J., “The Father consecrates us and sends us”, AGC 365 (1998), p. 25; The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Rome 1986; *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano. Ricerca sulla dimensione biblica delle Costituzioni della Famiglia Salesiana*, prepared by the Salesian Biblical Association, 1995.

⁶⁰ Cfr. C 106.

⁶¹ VECCHI J., “For you I study”, AGC (1997), p. 40-41.GC21 259; see Appendix n. 3: Guidelines for the programme of studies.

⁶² GC21 259; see Appendix n. 3: Guidelines for the programme of studies.

⁶³ Cfr. GC21 337.

Let every Province ensure a constant updating of the means necessary for knowing, studying and teaching “Salesianity”; let it create and/or maintain a “library of Salesianity” that is sufficiently complete and updated.

52. *Every confrere must cultivate **a knowledge of, and a sense of belonging to, the Salesian Family**. He must be ready for a formation that is reciprocal and carried out jointly, and prepare himself for his responsibility as animator within the Salesian Family,.*

53. *An esteem for and encounter **with various charisms and forms of spirituality** can foster a communion of gifts and help one to grow more deeply in one’s own identity as a Salesian.*

While the Salesian grows to maturity in his vocation and in his sense of belonging to the Congregation, he should be provided with occasions – during initial formation – for sharing with members belonging to other forms of consecrated life or of Christian commitment. It is not advisable, however, that he take part systematically and habitually in experiences of other spiritualities.⁶⁴

Initiatives for inter-Institute collaboration in formation (by way of events, programmes, or centres) offer a particular experience of communion, provided they maintain a proper relationship between each Institute’s identity and communion in diversity and ensure the communication of one’s own charism through living experience.⁶⁵

After initial formation one needs the agreement of one’s Superior to take part in ecclesial movements or to offer them a service of spiritual assistance.

⁶⁴ Cfr. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, Fraternal Life in Community, 46; VECCHI J., Salesians and Ecclesial Movements, AGC 338 (1991) p. 39-45.

⁶⁵ Cfr. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation, 9.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ASPECTS OF FORMATION AND THE VALUES AND ATTITUDES TO BE ASSUMED

54. “Each one of us is called by God to form part of the Salesian Society. Because of this *God gives him personal gifts*, and by faithful correspondence he finds his way to complete fulfilment in Christ.”¹

Vocation is a call that occurs with the help of intermediaries and external circumstances. But it is in the first place God’s call revealing itself through a variety of personal gifts (desires, hopes, plans and traits) - all this is a work of the Spirit - that are in tune with the project of Salesian life and enable us to live it. This vocation is recognized in a person; it totally involves him, all the areas of his personality for the whole of his life.

It is the task of formation to help recognize, assimilate and develop the values and attitudes that make him suitable for Salesian life. That suitability is a sign of his call and the outcome of his response.

Consequently, *formation must be complete*: it must include all aspects – the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the pastoral.² They are aspects that *coalesce with each other*: they are all simultaneously present and continually interact among themselves;³ they are not to be regarded as separate sectors but “must be harmonized into a living unity”.⁴

At the same time, *formation is an ongoing and dynamic reality*. The areas referred to and the elements they comprise are not to be considered in a static way, as if they were conditions to be fulfilled or targets to be reached once and for all. Rather they are to be considered against the background of change and development in each person, in the light of his continuing response which is elicited by his own growth, by the needs of the situation and by the circumstances affecting his life.

It is from the perspective of the Salesian charism that a synthesis is formed and the different areas of formation are viewed; it is on the basis of the charism that the particular significance and elements in the various areas are highlighted.

55. The areas we have indicated contain *the elements* we have to consider when discerning *the suitability of a vocation*. They point up the principles to be assimilated, the dispositions to be acquired, the attitudes to be manifested, and the things to be done if one is to accept and carry out the project of Salesian life with joy and maturity.

What has been said about *the different ways of realizing one’s identity as a Salesian and of personally embracing one’s vocation* makes us understand that the suitability of a vocation must also be seen in this perspective; it cannot be taken as a single, static, idealized model or as a sum of requirements considered separately.

Our presentation offers *a frame of reference* in which will be found at one and the same time the aspects that constitute the suitability of a vocation – we could call them the founding and specifying elements (the basic and the specific requirements), for without them there is no

¹ C 22.

² Cfr. VC 65.

³ Cfr. GC23 118.

⁴ C 102.

suitability for Salesian life - and other elements that need to be continually acquired and cultivated for a fuller and more authentic experience of one's vocation.

The frame of reference must be adopted on the basis of *the principle that a vocation needs to grow in quality* – this is therefore a principle that makes constant demands and continually provokes - keeping in mind that every Salesian lives his own vocation in a personal manner according to the gifts he has received. Against the backdrop of gradual growth, the pedagogical process of formation will help to distinguish between basic suitability, the suitability needed for the different stages of vocation commitment, and especially the maturity needed for the final commitment.

56. By identifying the values and attitudes needed to translate Salesian identity into personal experience, and pointing out the pedagogical approaches and activities to make them real, those responsible for formation are offered a basis for their task of direction and discernment. At the same time, each confrere receives a stimulus to make a concrete pledge of his desire and will to become a Salesian in every fibre of his being.

Each of the various phases of initial formation will lay emphasis on some of the values and attitudes that are more in harmony with its specific objectives. So, in the different stages and situations of his life, in the change of circumstances and the succession of tasks, each confrere will feel responsible for renewing himself in his mentality, attitudes and expertise, in order to be the better able to embody the Salesian vocation in his own person and pursue the path of holiness.

3.1 HUMAN FORMATION

57. Only a strong, free and balanced personality capable of integrating its different aspects in a harmonious whole, can sustain the process of developing his identity as a Salesian and enable himself to live his religious consecration in serenity and fullness. The whole work of formation would be deprived of its *necessary foundation* if it lacked a suitable human foundation, not only for the sake of a right and proper growth to maturity but also for the sake of the mission.⁵

On the other hand, when the experience of consecrated life pays heed to the anthropological dimension of all its components and assists the living of a profoundly rich humanity, it becomes a *prophetic example of true humanity* and serves as a fitting response to those who consider consecration an obstacle to a person and his fulfilment.⁶ In the present-day context growth in human maturity assumes special importance.

58. For the Salesian who by his profession is called to be a friend, an educator and pastor of the young, and a promoter of their full development, *the quality of his humanity is crucial*. His vocation requires a personality that can love and make itself loved in an affectionate, balanced and open manner, and be understanding and firm. For this he draws inspiration from Don Bosco: “deeply human, rich in the qualities of his people”.⁷

Human maturity is a *permanent undertaking*; it has to do with values and attitudes that are to be expressed in different ways in the various stages of life and in diverse cultural contexts.

⁵ Cfr. PDV 43.

⁶ Cfr. Fraternal life in community 35.

⁷ C 21.

3.1.1 Good health and the capacity to work

59. The Salesian style of life and work habitually requires *good health and physical resistance, together with a great capacity for work*.

Called from his earliest years to become “strong and robust”, Don Bosco would stress *the need for good health for a long and intense service to the mission*. To the novices he once said: “What I see as necessary is that you grow and become strong young men by keeping healthy and that you later be able to do a lot of work.”⁸ “Work, work, work!” he used to repeat to his Salesians. “A candidate for Salesian life must love work.”⁹ The Constitutions remind us that “unremitting and self-sacrificing work is a characteristic left us by Don Bosco.”¹⁰

Don Bosco himself was an example of a life devoted to work and he wanted his Salesians to be distinguished for their spirit of enterprise and industry. Valdocco became a school of work: it developed a pedagogy of duty which did not shrink from fatigue but became the practice of self-control and a way of living our spirituality.¹¹

60. This is why the Salesian:

- *takes care of his health*, observes the ordinary norms of personal hygiene, takes sufficient nourishment and sets aside enough time for rest and simple healthy recreation. As long as his age and physical state permit it, he keeps his body in good condition and ready for work, making use of physical exercise and sport in the company of young people;

- *loves daily work*, whether manual or intellectual, and carries it out “with tireless energy, taking care to do everything with simplicity and moderation”;¹²

- *adopts a rhythm of life and of orderly, methodical and sacrificing work*, avoiding the kind of overload that can cause tension and stress. Discipline and a sense of duty become for him his path of asceticism.¹³

For its part, the community:

- *provides and organizes all those elements that make for physical stability*, such as: work that is appropriate and tailored to each one’s capacities, suitable times for rest, healthy nourishment, possibilities for sport and physical exercise, and the necessary medical checks.

3.1.2 Psychological balance

⁸ BM XIII, p. 68.

⁹ BM XIII, p. 333.

¹⁰ C 78.

¹¹ Cfr. GC24 98.

¹² C 18.

¹³ Cfr. GC24 98.

61. The Salesian's special vocation and style of relating in community life and educative work require that he possess *sufficient mental balance*; a good self-image leading to positive feelings and attitudes towards life; a serene self-possession, self-confidence and an ability to make hard decisions for the sake of the unity he has managed to give to his whole experience.

62. Psychological balance, needed in a special way in a context that can lead to fragmentation and psychological fragility, is achieved through a *progressive integration of various elements* interacting positively among themselves.

Therefore, the Salesian:

- *seeks self-knowledge and self-acceptance*: he reflects on his own experience, and on his good qualities and limitations; he learns to accept himself; he fosters confidence in himself and in his abilities; he is able to see and make the most of his life-story from the viewpoint of the plan of salvation; he knows that God has his own designs for him and welcomes him with open arms, if he has but the courage to place himself in his hands. The joyful awareness of God's love for him keeps him serene and happy, and sustains him in moments of conflict and darkness;

- *increases his ability to manage his own inner world*: he learns to understand himself, his attitudes and the real motivations behind his actions, and to master his thoughts, feelings, fears and reactions to persons and events.

In his gradual process of growing to maturity, he makes an effort to capitalize on his good qualities and overcome difficulties. He is able to forestall possible conflicts. He knows how to be calm when successful and serene when he fails. He is free from rigid positions and inhibitions, and makes his decisions on the basis of true and authentic motives;

- *appreciates his community and the support of his brothers*: he makes himself a part of the community, establishes relationships in his life and his work, is open to sharing with his brothers also on the spiritual level, and refuses to isolate himself or hold back from communicating with others.

3.1.3 Affective and sexual maturity

63. To live the Salesian vocation in a fraternal community and in an educative and pastoral relationship requires a mature affectivity. As our Constitutions say, *a Salesian's love is that of "a father, brother and friend, able to draw out friendship in return"*.¹⁴ Family spirit and loving-kindness are the other names for a Salesian's mature affectivity.¹⁵ He loves his vocation and is called to love according to his vocation.¹⁶

God has given man the *capacity to love* by making use of his bodily and spiritual reality. Through his body he can give meaning to and express his love with the intensity of his sentiments and his heart, and accompany it with the purity of his spirit.

¹⁴ C 15.

¹⁵ Cfr. C 15.16.

¹⁶ Cfr. Fraternal life in community, 37.

Sexuality is a gift of God and a power that makes man and woman capable of communication, encounter and love.

64. The Salesian *sees his life as a gift he has received and that he has to transmit to others; he achieves his fulfilment by giving himself*. He trains himself to love gratuitously, to establish positive human relationships that are person-centred and authentic, and to give and receive affection in all simplicity. His love is deep and personal, and is made up of sincerity, fidelity and human warmth. He knows how to build truly strong friendships,¹⁷ free of possessive attitudes; he is able to live in solitude with serenity; and is quite capable of regulating his affective contacts with people, especially when it comes to educative and pastoral relationships.

In his dealings with women he is cordial, balanced and prudent; his attitude is one of esteem, respect and responsibility.

Such a purity of love and affection is not possible without a certain *discipline* in one's feelings, thoughts, desires and habits. The practice of self-control, which is an expression of the eminently positive virtue of chastity, channels the individual's sexual tendencies and capacities towards the harmony of the whole personality; it enables one to make a joyful gift of oneself, free of every attempt at selfish possession, and ensures that a rational approach prevails over one's impulses.

65. To live and grow in affective and sexual maturity, the Salesian:

- is mindful of *the value of his body and its meaning*; in his lifestyle he shows balance, mental and bodily hygiene, and temperance;

- recognizes *the value of masculine and feminine sexuality*, with their physical, psychological and spiritual connotations;

- sees his vocation as something that gives true meaning to life and *his consecration as a reality which confers beauty and goodness* on his existence; he grows in a sense of self-confidence, secure in his own identity; he is free from the need for various forms of support and compensation, also in the area of affectivity;

- nurtures *a deep friendship with Christ*, who calls him to fraternal communion and sends him out to love young people in his name; his life and his time are "filled" by God, by the community and by the young;

- *loves those with whom he shares his calling*; in the giving and receiving of affection he becomes aware of his value as a person and expresses the deepest capacities of his being;¹⁸ He loves the Salesian Congregation and considers the community his own family;

- feels at home among the young, and strives to be *a transparent sign of God's love* for them: he is not intrusive and not possessive, but desires their good with God's own benevolence;

- fosters *a mature and coherent relationship with lay collaborators*, both men and women; he is aware that a closer involvement of women at the level of the institution and of educative and pastoral activity introduces new aspects and specifically

¹⁷ Cfr. Fraternal life in community, 37.

¹⁸ Cfr. VECCHI J., "A love without limits for God and the young", AGC 366 (1999), p. 40.

feminine values, producing a new understanding of male identity and reciprocity, and touching on affectivity, relational ability and self-control;¹⁹

- *loves his own family*: a serene and mature relationship of love for his family has very positive implications for formation. On entering the Congregation he loses none of his love for his relatives, and especially for his parents; he gives it expression by his prayers, letters and visits;²⁰

- *develops friendships* that facilitate the assimilation of values, the striving for human and spiritual growth, and that confirm him in his vocation; such friendships avoid every form of selfishness and are open to the gaze of the Lord and of others;

- *remains vigilant* in his own life: he does not expose himself to situations or relationships that are not transparent; he practises mortification and the custody of the senses; he makes discreet and prudent use of the means of social communication.²¹ In all this he feels a commitment to be austere and ready for renunciation.

3.1.4 Relational ability

66. Interpersonal relationships form *the basis of the Salesian's educative and pastoral mission*. He must be capable of attracting and meeting young people, willing and prepared to “live and work together” and to animate persons, groups and communities.

“Rapport is at the heart of every educative approach, of every effort at collaboration, of family harmony and the effectiveness of an educative and pastoral community. ‘We must be brothers to men at the same time that we want to be their pastors, fathers and teachers. The right atmosphere for dialogue is friendship, or rather service.’”²²

Don Bosco offered his disciples *a serene and welcoming human relationship*, to which he gradually added a pastoral and sacramental dimension. The quality of educative encounters was always foremost in his mind.²³ “See to it that all with whom you come in contact become your friends,”²⁴ he used to advise.

67. Such a style of interpersonal relationships requires that the Salesian imbue his interactions with some specific human virtues:

- a constant regard for *justice, faithfulness to his word, polite manners, a sense of proportion* in relationships and behaviour, a kindly *concern* for others;

- the *acceptance of others*, even if they are different by reason of formation, age, culture, etc.

¹⁹ Cfr. GC24 33.

²⁰ Cfr. R 46.

²¹ Cfr. C 84.

²² GC24 92.

²³ Cfr. GC24 91.

²⁴ BM X, 445.

- *attitudes which facilitate dialogue*, such as empathy, trust, the ability to listen, openness of mind, the ability to see things from the other person's point of view, good manners and the ability to forgive;
- *the ability to collaborate with others*, the spirit of service, shared responsibility, and the acceptance of authority.

3.1.5 Responsible freedom

68. Freedom constitutes the core of the human person.

To live his vocation, the one who has made a radical choice of consecrated life requires a *formation to the responsible use of freedom*, especially in contexts in which subjectivity and personal autonomy are glorified and the outcome is individualism. In such contexts standardization is the norm, conditionings abound, appearances carry more weight than actions based on true and authentic motivations, and responses to immediate concerns are preferred to decisions guided by principles or to activities which give meaning to life.

It is a constant struggle therefore to *free oneself "from" whatever in life holds back and enslaves*, to free oneself "from" passions and sins, from selfishness and individualism, so as to be, on the other hand, *free "for" mastering oneself*, "for" being open to others and giving them generous service, free "for" acting according to truth and the underlying motivations of one's vocation.

The two aspects (freedom "from" and freedom "for") create a real autonomy: they give the capacity to make truly free decisions based on a conscience that is illuminated by truth and trained to think in terms of responsibility and discipline in life. This is precisely the reason why *conscience needs to be formed* in the values of Christian and Salesian life and of asceticism. Conscience it is that determines the responsible use of freedom.

69. The formation of conscience entails a patient work of listening and dialogue. It requires:

- *a serious critical formation* that enables one to pass respectful and objective judgments on persons and events and take a stand on cultural models and social norms. From this point of view it is important to be able to look at the means of social communication critically and use them responsibly;
- *an education to a sense of the mystery* encompassing life, a reality marked by sin and infidelity but seized and saved by Christ. This must help form the conviction that freedom is the fruit of a convinced and heartfelt obedience to truth;
- the ability to *examine one's life in the light of the Gospel* and the guidelines of the Church, so as to be able to discern good and evil, sin and sinful structures, God's action in one's self and one's past life;
- the ability to *bring together one's desires, energies and values* in a personal project of life, in which one assumes responsibility for one's growth and lives to the full the deepest motivations of one's vocation.

3.1.6 Openness to reality

70. Don Bosco developed his vocation *in dialogue with the reality of the young and ordinary people*, and in constant *interaction with the context of the Church and of society*.

Among the aspects that enrich the Salesian's humanity, rendering it more authentic, is the sharpening of his human sensitivity. This flows from his deep love for human beings and his attentiveness to the flow of history with its accompanying signs and demands.²⁵

Living in contact with the world of the young and with working-class surroundings, the Salesian understands their needs, perceives their unvoiced questions, shares their hopes and expectations, and feels with them in their suffering.

He experiences compassion for "the sheep without a shepherd",²⁶ makes himself one with them, and seeks to prolong the Lord's passage through the streets of the world.

In his love for the young the Salesian finds support for his own faith, and discovers values that encourage and enrich his life.

By becoming aware of the problems and difficulties experienced by the young, he grows in his enthusiasm for the mission and feels impelled to acquire the skills needed to respond in the spirit of the Gospel to the challenges appearing on humanity's new frontiers. He shares with others, and in an attitude of reflection and prayer brings before God all that he experiences.

Because of his nearness to and his sharing with needy and suffering humanity, he lives his vocation to the full.

71. The Salesian's openness to reality requires:

- attentiveness to the solicitations coming from his surroundings and to a possible *direct encounter with the realities of youth*, poverty and work; willingness to live attuned to the world's great problems;

- *sensitivity to culture and society*, contact with other workers in the field of education and human development, attentiveness to social communication;

- an effort to look at reality with *the attitude of the Lord who became flesh* and "desired to know joy and suffering, to experience weariness, to share feelings, to console sadness";²⁷

- an interest in making the best use of *information* – be it Salesian, ecclesial or cultural.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

72. "For reasons of health, to foster apostolic activity and life together and an atmosphere of prayer and recollection, every confrere should regulate his work in an orderly manner, and the local community should see to it that there is a balanced distribution of duties with opportune

²⁵ Cfr. C 19, 79, 119.

²⁶ Mt. 9,36.

²⁷ PDV 72.

*periods for rest and silence, and for suitable relaxation in common.*²⁸ *There should be a periodic assessment of the style of fraternal life, the family spirit and the quality of life.*

73. *Let every Salesian develop his capacity for communication and dialogue²⁹ and trust in his confreres. Let him be ready to accept differences and overcome prejudices; let him take an active part in community meetings, carry out faithfully the tasks entrusted to him, and learn to act in joint responsibility with others so as to arrive at a consensus in his brotherly relations and in his work.*³⁰

74. *“The Salesian... loses none of his love for his relatives and especially for his parents” and “the community maintains cordial relations with the family of each confrere.”*³¹

*During initial formation let there be an education to the proper balance between **relations with one’s family** and a sense of belonging to the community and to the Congregation, in accordance with the principles of consecrated life and the Salesian style of life.*³²

3.2 SPIRITUAL FORMATION

75. Spiritual formation, understood as giving shape to life in Christ or life according to the Spirit, is *the heart which unifies and gives life to a Salesian’s experience of his vocation*. This experience is first of all a spiritual encounter with God, and as such constitutes the central element of formation, that is, its foundation and motivation.

It is the completion of human formation; it contributes to building that “splendid blending of nature and grace”³³ which we admire in Don Bosco and which lies at the foundation of his life-project in the service of the young.³⁴ *It provides motives for intellectual formation*, from which it derives strength and sustenance. *It invigorates formation to education and pastoral work*, putting God and his Kingdom at the centre of apostolic work, and directing everything to him.

Spiritual formation embraces the attitudes needed to foster an experience of God. It is a particular way of living the strength of faith, the power of hope and the ardour of charity. Lying *at the centre of the Salesian enterprise*, spiritual formation gives it a unique character, establishes its motivations and moulds its apostolic drive.

76. To live the Salesian mission requires much more than just human qualities, intellectual preparation, a professional approach, apostolic creativity and a passion for the young: all these things are necessary, but not enough to provide adequate motivations to keep alive one’s experience of one’s vocation.³⁵ *The Salesian needs in the very first place a deep experience of God and of his Spirit*, who is the founding and driving element of the mission.

The Salesian is called to combine life in the Spirit and pedagogy, to live education as a locus of spirituality and a path to holiness. Apostolic fruitfulness, generosity in love for poor youth, and the ability to attract vocations among the new generations depend on the spiritual quality of consecrated life.³⁶

²⁸ R 43.

²⁹ Cfr. R 99.

³⁰ Cfr. VECCHI J., “Experts, witnesses and craftsmen of communion”, AGC 363 (1998), p. 34-35.

³¹ R 46.

³² Cfr. *ibid.*

³³ C 21.

³⁴ Cfr. *ibid.*

³⁵ Cfr. GC24 240; AGC 365, p. 10-11.

³⁶ Cfr. VC 93.

The need for spirituality is even more marked in a world and a culture that propel towards activism and self-sufficiency. A life centred on an encounter with and an experience of God is an *attractive witness and prophetic message* for the people of our day who are thirsting for absolute values. In this way the Salesian becomes a communicator of spirituality,³⁷ an animator and guide in the spiritual life³⁸ of young people and the laity and within the sphere of the Salesian Family.

77. Don Bosco was an ardent believer, *the originator of a school of spirituality*.³⁹

His experience of God highlighted those features of the figure of the Lord⁴⁰ to which he was particularly responsive, and it was identified “by specific spiritual emphases and choices of apostolate”,⁴¹ which mark out Salesian spirituality as an apostolic spirituality.

By approving the Congregation, the Church declares that this spirituality – transmitted by the Founder to his sons and daughters – has “all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel”.⁴²

It is therefore a “great spiritual current” in the Church, a “genuine and creative” school of holiness.⁴³ It is the way leading to that witness of holiness which is “the most precious gift we can offer to the young”.⁴⁴

We are certainly not lacking in concise descriptions that sum up and present the spiritual physiognomy of the Salesian and its distinguishing characteristics. In the Constitutions we can find its authentic presentation, the corresponding values and the factors that help to realize it; in them Salesian spirituality, “studied by successive generations who have lived it, is handed on to us in a magnificent manner in particular formulas which reflect this long experience.”⁴⁵ We now take up some of them again and comment on them briefly.

3.2.1 Giving the first place to God and his design of salvation

78. The Salesian is called to find God present and close to him at every moment of his life. “God sees you” were the words Don Bosco wanted written on the walls of the Oratory.

The Salesian experiences God as someone who is near to him and involves him in his design of salvation for the young.

This *sense of the active presence of the Lord*, as intensely lived by Don Bosco and his disciples, is handed on to the Salesian as a precious legacy.

79. *Jesus the Good Shepherd* is the living centre of his consecrated life. While it is true that all consecrated persons are centred on Christ, this translates for the Salesian into a specific kind of witness with a pedagogical and pastoral slant that makes him look at Christ as the “Good Shepherd”, the Redeemer and Saviour.⁴⁶

³⁷ Cfr. GC24 239.

³⁸ Cfr. VC 55.

³⁹ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Iuvenum Patris*, 5.

⁴⁰ Cfr. C 11.

⁴¹ VC 93.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Cfr. VIGANO’ E., “Rediscovering the spirit of Mornese”, AGC 301, p. 24.

⁴⁴ C 25.

⁴⁵ VECCHI J., “The Father consecrates us and sends us,” AGC 365 (1998), p. 25.

⁴⁶ Cfr. VIGANO’ E., “Salesian spirituality for the new evangelization,” AGC 334 (1990), p. 33.

The Salesian contemplates Jesus the Good Shepherd in his gratitude to the Father for his plan of salvation, in his predilection for the little ones and the poor, in his zeal in preaching, healing and saving because of the urgency of the coming of the Kingdom. He imitates the Good Shepherd's gentleness and self-giving, and shares his desire to gather his disciples in the unity of a single family.⁴⁷

He is a "living" Jesus, busy and on the move searching for the stray and holding a great feast when he returns with the lost sheep on his shoulders.

He is a Jesus who keeps God his Father in his mind and heart, prays to him unceasingly, thanks him, carries out his will, speaks of him to his disciples, and declares himself to be the way to see and meet him.

80. Through Jesus the Salesian encounters the Father and lives in the Spirit. Working for the salvation of young people and living the spirituality of the Preventive System, he experiences the *fatherhood of God*,⁴⁸ recognizes his caring presence and action, and feels himself called to reveal the Father to the young.

The Holy Spirit, who raised up Don Bosco, forming within him the heart of a father and teacher and guiding him in his mission,⁴⁹ calls every disciple of Don Bosco to continue the same "*experience of the Spirit*"⁵⁰ in the service of youth. The Salesian is a spiritual man, taking care to discern the ways in which the Spirit operates in the hearts of the young. He can grasp his presence in their questions, expectations and cries for help, and becomes an instrument of his workings in their hearts.

Bestowed on him by the Father in his consecration,⁵¹ the Spirit shapes and moulds his heart, configuring him to Christ, the obedient, poor and chaste One, and prompting him to make Christ's mission his own.

81. To foster his experience of God, the Salesian:

- *deepens his faith* and lives the Christian mystery, enrolling himself in the school of the Word of God;

- *puts God at the centre of his life*, engaging always "in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ and with the Father", and remaining constantly attentive to the presence of the Spirit. He does "everything for God's love" so as to become, like Don Bosco, "a contemplative in action".⁵² He acts in such a way that all that he does is an expression of his inner self, and his whole life becomes a celebration of the "liturgy of life";

- *feels great delight in revealing* especially to the young the unfathomable riches of the mystery of God and in being a sign and bearer of his love;⁵³

- in union with Christ, *fixes his gaze and his heart on the Father*, fostering a trustful attitude and enthusiastically playing his part in realizing his plan of salvation; he is grateful for the gift of his vocation and feels committed to live it in all its fullness;

⁴⁷ Cfr. C 11.

⁴⁸ Cfr. C 12, 20.

⁴⁹ Cfr. C 1.

⁵⁰ MuR 11.

⁵¹ Cfr. C 3.

⁵² C 12.

⁵³ Cfr. C 34, 2.

- *captivated by Christ, seeks to imitate him* in the gift of himself and in service. He strives to make Christ's sentiments his own and become one with him. Christ, his fundamental option, becomes the criterion of all his decisions. There is no room in his heart for decisions that are anterior to or independent of Christ; he embraces the evangelical counsels in order to share Jesus' way of life and to take part in his mission in a particularly profound and fruitful way;⁵⁴

- *grows in his attentiveness to the Spirit*, recognizing and gladly accepting his work of sanctification and renewal. He is constantly alert to the presence of the Spirit in his life, in persons and in history. Guided by him, he lives in an attitude of discernment and openness to God's will. He embraces his formation experience as an experience of openness, docility and collaboration with the Spirit,⁵⁵ the "lasting source of grace and a support for his daily efforts to grow towards the perfect love of God and men".⁵⁶

3.2.2 Sense of the Church

82. The mission of Don Bosco is *part of the very mystery of the Church* in her historical development: Don Bosco was raised in the Church and for the Church.⁵⁷ Love for the Church is for Don Bosco one of the characteristic expressions of his life and holiness.

The spiritual experience of the Salesian is therefore an experience of the Church.

Our Constitutions say: "The Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church."⁵⁸ That implies a strong sense of the Church, a *close relationship* with her, and a cordial and intense *communion* with the Holy Father and with all those who work for the Kingdom.

83. To grow in a sense of belonging to the Church, the Salesian:

- *fosters in himself a spiritual sensitivity that sees the Church as "the centre of unity and communion* of all the forces working for the Kingdom"⁵⁹ and works hard in her, in line with his particular vocation, so that "she may appear to the world as the universal sacrament of salvation",⁶⁰

- *in his missionary enthusiasm, feels concern for the anxieties and problems of the universal Church*, takes part in the pastoral work of the particular Church, and educates young Christians to an authentic sense of Church;⁶¹

- *shows his sense of Church* "in an attitude of filial loyalty to Peter's successor and to his teaching, and in [his] efforts to live in communion and collaboration with the bishops, clergy, religious and laity",⁶²

⁵⁴ Cfr. VC 18.

⁵⁵ Cfr. C 99.

⁵⁶ C 25.

⁵⁷ Cfr. VIGANO' E., "The Salesian Family," AGC 304 (1982), p. 10.

⁵⁸ C 6.

⁵⁹ C 13.

⁶⁰ C 6.

⁶¹ Cfr. C 13.

⁶² C 13.

- *practises a “spirituality of communion”* that becomes “a sign for all the world and a compelling force that leads people to faith in Christ”.⁶³

3.2.3 The presence of Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians

84. Very closely connected with the Salesian’s spiritual experience is the special presence of Mary in his vocation and mission. Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, appears as an icon of his spirituality inspiring him with pastoral love and giving him an apostolic heart. In Don Bosco’s experience of his founding charism, from his first dream to the vast missionary horizons, she was a constant and decisive presence.

In Mary Immaculate the Salesian glimpses the fruitful presence of the Spirit, availability to God’s designs, the break with sin and with all the forces that sustain it, and the totality of consecration. Mary inspires in him an openness to the supernatural, a pedagogy of grace, delicacy of conscience, and the motherly aspects of accompanying young people in the work of education.⁶⁴

In Mary Help of Christians the Salesian contemplates the motherhood of Mary in relation to Christ and the Church, the support of Mary for the people of God in the vicissitudes of history, her collaboration in the work of salvation and the incarnation of the Gospel among the peoples, and her mediation of grace for every Christian and every community. She keeps alive in us a sense of the Church, enthusiasm for the mission, apostolic courage, and the ability to gather together forces for the Kingdom.⁶⁵

85. To experience Mary’s presence in his vocation and to grow in a “strong filial devotion”⁶⁶ to her, the Salesian:

- *nurtures a personal relationship with her*, basing it on a contemplation of her role in the plan of salvation and in the mystery of Christ, and manifesting it in a filial attitude in various Marian practices;

- *feels her actively close to him, encouraging and supporting him in his apostolic consecration*, and leading him to the fullness of his offering to the Lord;⁶⁷

- *draws inspiration and courage from her for his work of education*: he learns from her to be close to the young and solicitous in serving them.

3.2.4 Young people, the meeting-place with God

86. “We believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of meeting with him and to dispose us to serve him in them.”⁶⁸

⁶³ VC 46.

⁶⁴ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*Indications for a process of growth in Salesian spirituality*,” AGC 354 (1995), p. 48-49.

⁶⁵ Cfr. *ibid.*

⁶⁶ C 92.

⁶⁷ Cfr. *ibid.*

⁶⁸ GC23 95.

This profession of faith of the GC23 points to *the crossroads in a Salesian's spiritual life*. God makes an appointment with him and allows himself to be met in his educational encounter with the young.

For this reason the first Oratory was a spiritual and educational experience, a realistic pedagogy of holiness for both educator and pupil. The Salesian vocation brings us “to seek holiness through [our] involvement in education”, to achieve “the perfection of charity through teaching”.⁶⁹ The interchange between education and holiness is a characteristic aspect of the figure of Don Bosco. He achieved his personal holiness through his educational endeavours which he carried out with zeal and an apostolic heart.⁷⁰

Today too, in the spirituality of daily life and of the playground, the Salesian relives Don Bosco's spiritual experience and becomes a spiritual man possessing a sense of God.

87. *The mission of the Salesian* is not simply equated with work or external activity, but is *a true spiritual experience*. It is not he who goes towards the young on his own. It is the Father who consecrates him, sends him as his co-worker and apostle of the young in whom he is already at work through his Spirit, and associates him in his designs for them.

The purpose of the mission – to bring God's love to the young – requires that in the whole of his person and his activity, he be detached from himself like a humble servant, and concentrate on the two poles of the living Christ and the young, and on the meeting of the two.⁷¹

Precisely because it is a matter of a spiritual experience that is born, lives and thrives on apostolic action, the Salesian is able to forge in himself and in his work of educational action *a genuine synthesis between education and evangelization*, between human promotion and adherence to the Gospel, between faith and culture, between work and prayer.

88. Here, then, are some attitudes that the Salesian fosters unceasingly:

- *he works with the young with genuine supernatural motivation*, rising above the level of his inclinations and natural preferences;

- *he kindles in himself the religious and spiritual experience of the mission*: he grows in awareness of being sent by the Father to accomplish his plan of salvation; he strives to make himself available like the Son of whose love he is a sign and bearer; he keeps himself open to the Holy Spirit who fills his heart with pastoral love and inspires all his efforts;

- *he lives enthusiastically his experience of the mission of the Congregation*, that is, his service to the young using the method of Don Bosco, and in this way he takes part in the mission of the Church;

- *he trains himself to look at the youth reality with the attitude of the Good Shepherd*; he perceives in the needs of young people a cry for salvation and the call to him to respond; he makes a spiritual journey with them, helping them through the sacraments, spiritual direction and discernment;

- *he submits his work to the so-called “apostolic” rules*. He knows he must work with competence, but he relies primarily on God's strength. He prays much and remains modest when he succeeds. He does not ask to see results, but trusts in the fruitfulness God bestows;

⁶⁹ VC 96.

⁷⁰ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Iuvenum Patris*, 5.

⁷¹ Cfr. The Project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 99.

- *he accepts the renunciations* his work entails and believes in the mysterious value of suffering. He is favourably disposed to the involvement of others and to the structures of apostolic life. His obedience comes from his heart. He is able to collaborate with others and share his apostolic work with them. He practises temperance and avoids comforts and an easy life.

3.2.5 The experience of God in community life

89. The Salesian finds in his living and working together a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling his vocation.⁷² *The experience of community life is for him a religious and a profoundly human experience.* With and through his brothers, his youngsters and his collaborators he meets the Lord and feels his presence.

As he takes part in the common mission, the Salesian discerns situations with his community in the light of the Gospel, and feels jointly responsible for the measures taken in the educative and pastoral field and for bringing them to fruition.

He helps his community to become a centre of communion and participation by bringing in and animating other apostolic forces.

In a world sorely in need of communion, the Salesian's "living and working together" with confreres of different ages, languages and cultures is a sign that dialogue is always possible, and a prophetic statement that communion can bring differences into harmony: it proclaims with the eloquence of facts the transforming power of the Good News.⁷³ In this way *communion becomes mission*⁷⁴ and a wellspring of spirituality.

90. To experience God in his community life, the Salesian fosters the following attitudes in himself:

- *he considers the community "a mystery which must be contemplated and welcomed* with a heart full of gratitude in the clear context of faith".⁷⁵ He accepts his brothers as God's gift to him. He loves them as Christ taught and makes the faith-sharing experience of listening to the Word and celebrating the Eucharist the basis of community life. He strives to let his radical commitment to Jesus emerge in his daily life and endeavours to make his community a "sign", a "school" and a "domain of faith";⁷⁶

- aware of his own limitations, *the Salesian loves his community just as it is*, with its highs and lows, its struggle to be faithful and its shortcomings;

- *he lives the family spirit*, that is, mutual affection, a network of fraternal and friendly relationships, a sharing of goods, a fraternal style of exercising authority and obedience, dialogue and shared responsibility in work; he maintains a warm relationship with his Rector, imitating that of the first Salesians towards Don Bosco;

⁷² Cfr. C 49.

⁷³ Cfr. Fraternal life in community, 56.

⁷⁴ Cfr. VC 46.

⁷⁵ Fraternal life in community, 12.

⁷⁶ Cfr. GC23 216-218.

- *he refines his capacity for interpersonal communication*, reaching the point of sharing his feelings, his prayer and his spiritual and apostolic experiences;

- *he keeps faithful to the community project of life* and takes an active part in its significant moments such as the “community day”, the community meetings, the assemblies and council meetings;

- *he lives and experiences in a practical way his belonging to the provincial and the world community*;

- *he grows in an appreciation of the mission as a most exhilarating experience of communion* that constantly helps him to rise above every form of egoism and individualism. He reads and assesses situations together with others, collaborates with all those who work in the pastoral field, and carries out the common project in a spirit of shared responsibility and solidarity, discharging his own responsibilities and respecting those of others;

- *he lives inserted in the particular Church* with a sense of communion and is ready to join hands with all the forces working for the young in the area.

3.2.6 Following Christ in his obedience, poverty and chastity

91. Salesian spiritual life is a deep experience of God that is sustained by, and in its turn sustains, a form of life based entirely on Gospel values.⁷⁷

For this reason, *the Salesian embraces the kind of obedient, poor and virginal life that Jesus chose* for himself while on earth. It is his radical manner of living the Gospel and sure way of giving himself totally to the young for love of God. It is his path to perfect love.⁷⁸

As he grows in the radicalism of the Gospel giving it an intensely apostolic slant, he turns his life into an educational message, addressed especially to young people, proclaiming “that God exists, that his love can fill a life completely, and that the need to love, the urge to possess, and the freedom to control one’s whole existence, find their fullest meaning in Christ the Saviour.”⁷⁹

3.2.6.1 FOLLOWING CHRIST IN HIS OBEDIENCE

92. Obedience to the Father was for Jesus the synthesis of his life, and he embodied it in his Paschal mystery. He revealed his identity as Son and Servant, showing himself united to his Father in an absolutely unique manner and totally docile to him. *His consecration by the Father coincided with his total availability for the mission* of salvation.

For the Salesian, one of the main reasons for obedience having the first place – Don Bosco used to say that “in a religious Congregation obedience is all”⁸⁰ – lies in the particular importance that the “mission” occupies in his life,⁸¹ and especially in its community aspect.⁸² *Obedience makes him fully available* to serve the young.

⁷⁷ Cfr. C 60.

⁷⁸ Cfr. PC 1.

⁷⁹ C 62.

⁸⁰ BM X, 463.

⁸¹ Cfr. C 3.

In the present cultural climate that gives prominence to self-realization and individual resourcefulness, the disciple of the obedient Christ *perfects his freedom* as a consecrated person by putting his whole self at the service of the common mission with initiative, responsibility and docility, avoiding every form of individualism.

93. To live the experience of obedience the Salesian pays attention to the following attitudes:

- he strives to effect in himself *the difficult transition from the things that please him to the things that "please the Father,"* making his own the sentiments of Christ;

- *he seeks the will of the Father* with the help of prayer and through such proper channels as community dialogue, pastoral discernment, attentiveness to concrete situations and the signs of the times, and the fraternal talk with the superior, and then he carries it out with total dedication;

- *he freely embraces the Constitutions* as his project of life and holiness, and humbly *accepts the guidelines* of the Church and her Pastors, and the directives of the Congregation given in its General Chapters and in the statements of the Rector Major and the other superiors;

- *he fulfils his duties* with generosity and creativity, investing all his gifts in the service of the mission;

- *he takes on the mission of the institution to which he is sent*, is open to dialogue and to sharing responsibility in the community, works according to the common project, and implements it, carrying out his own role and respecting the contribution of others;

- *he lives his obedience in the exercise of his roles of authority and government*, discharging them in a style which animates, encouraging collaboration and consensus in work, promoting a sense of the common mission, and knowing when to intervene with kindness and courage;

- *when obedience involves difficulties that test his love*, he looks to Jesus, the obedient son of the Father.⁸³ He recalls Don Bosco's words: "If we should find some article of the rules or some duty or task irksome, let's not lose heart. Let's overcome that feeling for Our Lord's sake and for the reward which awaits us... Thus we shall become truly obedient."⁸⁴

3.2.6.2 FOLLOWING CHRIST IN HIS POVERTY

94. *Jesus embraced poverty* as a way of life, as an expression of complete commitment to the mission, of solidarity with us and of sacrifice of his own interests, and as a pastoral concern and preference for the poor. *In Jesus the Salesian finds his true riches*; in him he wants to love poor youth and feel a sense of solidarity with them.

*Poverty is an attitude of the heart,*⁸⁵ and a characteristic of the mission. It is a personal and community style of life that sets free for a generous dedication to the service of the Gospel.

⁸² Cfr. C 50.

⁸³ Cfr. C 71.

⁸⁴ BM VI, p. 556.

⁸⁵ "You cannot practise poverty unless you love it," Don Bosco used to say. Cfr. BM V, 442.

In this way *the Salesian and the community become a model* of an alternative society that aims at the common good, respects the value of every individual, develops on the basis of justice and equity, and is solicitous for those who are weak and vulnerable.⁸⁶

95. In a gradual and constant effort, the Salesian grows in the following attitudes:

- *he takes Jesus in his poverty as his model of life* and finds in him his real treasure: “I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection”;⁸⁷

- *he seeks to live a simple and hard-working life with joy*, loves apostolic work and service to his community,⁸⁸ willingly does manual work, and accepts with simplicity the inevitable inconveniences and renunciations;

- *he puts his trust in God’s designs for his own life*; he feels a sense of responsibility for the goods he uses and is sensitive to the community witness of poverty; he strives to share everything in a brotherly manner: material goods, the fruits of his work, the gifts he receives, his energies, talents and experience; he knows how to depend on the community and his superior;⁸⁹

- *he manifests his poverty in his fidelity to those to whom he is sent*, in the shape he gives to his educative and pastoral work in different settings, in the particular angle from which he looks at reality and events, in his sensitivity to social situations and new forms of poverty, prompted also by the social teaching of the Church; he feels impelled by his vocation to take an interest in the poor and in their problems, to “love them in Christ”⁹⁰ with a love that feels with them and is resourceful, and to share in their condition of life. He is happy to work with poor youth, with young workers and with working-class people. He fosters in himself and in others a love for the missions and an involvement in missionary animation;

- *he lives out his work of education and promotion as an excellent service to the poor*, and for this he draws on the most appropriate structures and means, and joins administrative ability with trust in Providence, recourse to “benefactors” and full personal dedication.

3.2.6.3 FOLLOWING CHRIST IN HIS CHASTITY

96. “Union with God”, “predilection for the young”, “loving-kindness”, and “family spirit” are all characteristics of the Salesian spirit and describe the Salesian way of loving.

The Salesian daily *experiences the love of God that fills his life completely*⁹¹ and lives his chastity joyfully as a sign that points to the living Christ, risen from the dead, present in his Church, and able to captivate hearts.⁹²

⁸⁶ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*Sent to bring good news to the poor*,” AGC 367 (1999), p. 9-10.

⁸⁷ Phil. 3,8-10.

⁸⁸ Cfr. R 64.

⁸⁹ Cfr. C 76.

⁹⁰ C 79.

⁹¹ Cfr. C 62.

⁹² VECCHI J., “*A love without limits for God and the young*,” AGC 366 (1999), p. 13.

He is convinced that *consecrated chastity bestows a special quality on his capacity to love* and makes him generous and happy in giving himself without reserve, free of heart to love God alone above all things and capable of putting loving-kindness into practice.

He learns to become *a witness of God's predilection for the young*, an educator capable of incarnating God's fatherhood towards them so that they "know that they are loved". By means of a charity that knows how to make itself loved he educates to true love and purity.

In the context of a culture that attaches a lot of importance to the body and not infrequently extols sexuality, the effort to live chaste and the testimony of a happy and balanced personality are *a sign of the power of God's grace in the weakness of the human condition*. Drawing from life-experience, the Salesian declares that with the help of the Lord it is possible to direct one's heart, to educate one's affections, and to master one's self so as to live a genuinely human experience of loving God and neighbour.

97. Formation to chastity requires some special conditions:

- *to let one's self be educated and to educate to affective maturity and to love*, starting from the realization that love is at the centre of life and is not to be reduced to one aspect alone, the physical, but involves all aspects of the person, including the psychological and the spiritual; to grow in the conviction that true love is always directed to another; it is a gift; and it makes one capable of renunciation;⁹³

- *to love God with all one's strength*, and in him to love especially the young to whom one is sent: to this end, the Salesian embraces a form of life and style of educative and pastoral love that entail a renunciation of married life and of all that belongs to it;

- *to integrate the need to love and be loved* into one's capacity for friendship and fraternal sharing, into the family spirit, and into the loving-kindness of the Preventive System which is a capacity to love and make oneself loved;

- *to educate one's self to a love for others* that includes respect, sincerity, human warmth, fidelity and understanding, and overcomes the barriers which keep persons apart and the attitudes which tend to exploit them;

- *to become aware of one's fragility* and to practise temperance and self-control, keeping a balance in one's emotions and a mastery over one's sexual urges; to be prudent in interpersonal relationships, in everyday language, and in the use of the means of social communication;

- *to implore God's help and live in his presence*; to nourish one's love for Christ; to make use of the sacrament of Reconciliation as a means of purification; to entrust oneself with simplicity to a spiritual director; and to turn with filial trust to Mary Immaculate who helps to love as Don Bosco did.⁹⁴

3.2.7 In dialogue with the Lord

⁹³ Cfr. R 66, 68.

⁹⁴ Cfr. C 84.

98. In his prayer the Salesian develops, nourishes and celebrates his ability to *meet God in his life and in his educative work with the young*, and his joy in contemplating Jesus as the Good Shepherd, God the Father as the father of his young people, and the Spirit who is at work in them.

He knows that prayer is first of all docility to the Spirit, and then a humble, trusting and apostolic experience on the part of the one who spontaneously unites praying with living,⁹⁵ and in this way attains “that *tireless industry made holy* by prayer and union with God that should be the characteristic of the sons of St. John Bosco”.⁹⁶

99. He imitates Don Bosco who lived and formed his Salesians to a simple, practical and profound relationship with God. Don Bosco gave an example of a constantly prayerful attitude and an ability to direct everything to God’s glory, to live and work in his presence, and to have God’s Kingdom as his sole preoccupation. Following his example, the Salesian “cultivates union with God, aware of the need to pray without ceasing”.⁹⁷

His relationship with God and his apostolic interior life form the heart of his experience and permeate his whole being, even before they translate into activities or practices of piety. His is the prayer of the *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*, which finds its source in the Eucharist and manifests itself in a complete dedication to apostolic work.⁹⁸

100. There is nothing special or exceptional about *the Salesian’s manner of praying*. He follows the pattern of prayer that the Church offers the good Christian. Adopting the Church’s pedagogy, he relives the mysteries of redemption in the various seasons of the liturgical year and allows himself to be evangelized by the Word.

Like Don Bosco, he performs the ordinary *practices of piety* with an intense faith: “over and above their function as means of personal sanctification”, they are for him “moments of training in order to collaborate ever more intensely in the work of transforming the world according to God’s plan”.⁹⁹

He prays *with his community*. In its prayer the community “deepens its awareness of its intimate and living relationship with God, and of its saving mission”,¹⁰⁰ and shares this attitude of prayer with the educative community and with the Salesian Family, especially when celebrating the Salesian feasts.

The prayer of the Salesian bears the imprint of an apostle and an educator committed to the good of the young. *It is linked to life*: it precedes, accompanies and follows apostolic activity; it is bound up with the young, for whom and with whom he prays.

Precisely for this reason the prayer of the Salesian *has a youthful style* marked by simplicity, liveliness and truth.¹⁰¹ It is “joyful and creative, simple and profound. It lends itself to community participation, is drawn from life experience and flows back into it”.¹⁰²

101. In the Salesian’s personal and community dialogue with the Lord there are certain special expressions and occasions that need to be underlined:

“**The Word of God** is the first source of all Christian spirituality. It gives rise to a personal relationship with the living God and with his saving and sanctifying will.”¹⁰³

⁹⁵ Cfr. C 86.

⁹⁶ C 95.

⁹⁷ C 12.

⁹⁸ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*This is my Body, which is given for you*,” AGC 371 (2000), p. 39-41.

⁹⁹ SGC 535.

¹⁰⁰ C 85.

¹⁰¹ Cfr. C 86: The Project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 675-677.

¹⁰² C 86.

¹⁰³ VC 94.

“For us [it] is a source of spiritual life, food for prayer, light to see God’s will in the events of life, and strength to live out our vocation faithfully.”¹⁰⁴ For this reason, the Salesian listens to it with faith and humility, accepts it in his heart as a guide for his steps, makes it bear fruit in his life, and proclaims it with joy.¹⁰⁵

The hearing of the Word “is the daily moment which is most efficacious for ongoing formation”.¹⁰⁶ The Word is actualized in a special way in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the practice of meditation. Daily meditation is a privileged place for intimacy with the Lord, a practical occasion to become familiar with the Word of God and incarnate it in one’s life.

102. *The celebration of the **Eucharist*** is the central act of the day for the Salesian. In it he gives thanks to the Father, commemorates the plan of salvation accomplished by the Son, communicates with the Body and Blood of Christ, and receives the Spirit who enables him to build fraternal communion and renew his apostolic commitment.

The Eucharistic presence in the Salesian house is for a son of Don Bosco a reason for frequent encounters with Christ, from whom he draws energy and endurance in his work for the young.¹⁰⁷

The grace of the Eucharistic mystery is extended to the different hours of the day through the celebration of *the **Liturgy of the Hours***.¹⁰⁸

103. The celebration of *the sacrament of **Reconciliation*** is the most significant and efficacious expression of the daily striving for conversion. It gives the joy of the Father’s pardon, rebuilds brotherly communion and purifies apostolic intentions.¹⁰⁹

Don Bosco insisted on the pedagogical importance of the sacrament of Reconciliation and presented the regular and frequent celebration of the sacrament as the key to the personal spiritual progress and educational development of young people.

The Salesian loves the sacrament of Reconciliation and makes it loved.

104. For the Salesian, ***devotion to Mary*** is a powerful and happy reminder to recognize and invoke Mary as “a model of prayer and pastoral love, the teacher of wisdom and guide of our Family”, and to contemplate and imitate “her faith, her concern for the needy, her fidelity at the hour of the cross, and her joy at the wonders wrought by the Father”. After the example of Don Bosco, he feels committed to encourage “a strong filial devotion” to her, the Immaculate Help of Christians.¹¹⁰

105. Here are some points that need attention. They both sustain and express a Salesian’s prayer experience and form his *pedagogy of life*:

- he strives to *celebrate the mystery of Christ in time* by living the different seasons of *the liturgical year* as moments articulating the phases of his Christian experience and by giving spiritual importance to *Sunday*;

- he *cultivates his faith*, deepens his knowledge of the Christian mystery, and updates the theological and spiritual truths that motivate his prayer experience;

¹⁰⁴ C 87.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. *ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ VECCHI J., “*This is my Body, which is given for you,*” AGC 371 (2000), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. C 88.

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. C 89.

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. C 90.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. C 92.

- he *makes his participation in the liturgy a continuing school of prayer*, and learns to listen to the voice of God and receive his grace; he perseveres in prayer even when he passes through periods of aridity;

- he *celebrates the Liturgy of the Hours* as an extension of the Eucharistic mystery during the day, joining with his community in praising the Lord at designated times;

- he *develops an awareness of his apostolic mission*: he goes in the midst of young people, not just because he personally chooses to do so but because the Lord sends him to act in his name; he knows that the Lord goes ahead of him; it is his conviction that the work he is doing is a work of redemption - either as a liberation from different forms of evil or as an evangelization of different human situations;

- he *loves to pray with his community* and is faithful to the times when his community gathers together for prayer. He discovers the beauty of sharing personal faith experiences and apostolic concerns with his community. Where it is practised with spontaneity and by common agreement, such sharing “nourishes faith and hope as well as mutual respect and trust; it facilitates reconciliation and nourishes fraternal solidarity in prayer”;¹¹¹

- he *receives help for his progress in prayer from his encounters with his brothers and from spiritual direction*;

- he *makes the most of the opportunities and occasions that foster a lively and renewed manner of celebrating personal and community prayer*. In this way he overcomes the risks of formalism, routine and passivity that often pose a threat to the common and obligatory forms of prayer.

106. The Salesian’s spiritual experience finds strong motivations in apostolic activity, but is also subject at the same time to certain risks. The Salesian is called to live the grace of unity, *avoiding “any dichotomy between interior life and pastoral commitment*, between religious spirit and educational work, or the escape to any other forms which are not in line with those three words of Don Bosco: work, prayer, temperance”¹¹².

The Salesian is watchful lest his spiritual progress slow down or stop altogether, and his spiritual life be endangered by superficiality or dissipation. To this end he makes every effort to walk in the Spirit, to work under the influence of his apostolic interior life and to cultivate a unified life.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

Community life

107. *Let the community foster a style of brotherly communication and sharing of Salesian experience so as to strengthen family spirit, mutual help and the capacity for fraternal correction.*¹¹³ *Steps must be taken to improve the quality of the different forms of meeting and*

¹¹¹ Fraternal life in community, 16.

¹¹² VECCHI J., “*The Father consecrates us and sends us*,” AGC 365 (1998), p. 31.

¹¹³ Cfr. GC21 59b; SGC 494, 540.

sharing: an exchange of views on the mission, community discernment, common prayer, the “community day”,¹¹⁴ the drafting of the educative and pastoral plan, the programming, the revision of life, the study of the guidelines of the Church and of the Congregation, the community assessments of its fraternal life, its state of poverty,¹¹⁵ its prayer life,¹¹⁶ its style of life in keeping with the values of Salesian spirituality, etc.

Life according to the evangelical counsels

Salesian obedience

108. *Let every Salesian take part in drawing up the local and provincial educative and pastoral plans and dispose himself for working with others.*¹¹⁷

109. *“Faithful to Don Bosco’s recommendation each confrere meets frequently with his superior for a **friendly talk**.”¹¹⁸ “During the period of initial formation the confreres will have once a month the talk with the superior referred to in article 70 of the Constitutions.”¹¹⁹*

Salesian poverty

110. *Let all the confreres live their poverty “in detachment of heart and generous service of others”; their manner should be “marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative”.¹²⁰ Let them grow in their oneness with the poor,¹²¹ and work for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need.*¹²²

“The community, whether local or provincial, should examine at intervals it considers opportune its own state of poverty, both as regards its collective witness and the services it renders, and should study the means to ensure a constant renewal.”¹²³

111. *During the period of initial formation it is necessary to ensure that each confrere:*

- fulfils his duties responsibly, takes his studies seriously, and shows willingness to perform the domestic chores required by the community;*
- chooses to be one with the world of the young and the poor, even by directly experiencing it;*
- is trained in the responsible use of money and in giving an account of his spending, and is invited, when it is appropriate, to take part in the administration of the community;¹²⁴*
- is introduced into the knowledge of economic matters and learns to make responsible use of the tools of administrative management necessary for the mission.*

¹¹⁴ GC23 222.

¹¹⁵ Cfr. R 65.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. R 174.

¹¹⁷ Cfr. GC24 152.

¹¹⁸ C 70.

¹¹⁹ R 79.

¹²⁰ C 73.

¹²¹ Cfr. C 79.

¹²² Cfr. C 73.

¹²³ R 65.

¹²⁴ Cfr. SGC 613; ASC 253, p. 55; ASC 276, p. 77.

Salesian chastity

112. *From the very first years of formation, steps should be taken to offer, with the help of personal dialogue and a follow-up of the whole formation experience, an education to sexuality that is geared to each person and that helps him to understand its truly human and Christian nature and also its purpose in marriage and in consecrated life;*¹²⁵ *such an education must lead him to esteem and love the life of consecration and “develop a serious and mature attitude with regard to the opposite sex”.*¹²⁶

113. *Let the confreres be duly helped to willingly embrace the self-discipline that consecrated chastity entails.*¹²⁷ *In particular:*

- *let them examine whether their attitudes and behaviour towards others, men and women, and towards the young are consistent with their option for Salesian religious life and the witness proper to it;*¹²⁸

- *let them accept eventual fraternal corrections;*¹²⁹

- *let them know how to make a balanced use of free time, of the means of social communication and of reading matter;*¹³⁰ *and let them be prudent in making visits and frequenting amusements.*¹³¹

*To promote the gift of Salesian chastity let the community foster a brotherly atmosphere and family spirit among the confreres and in their relationships with the young.*¹³²

In dialogue with the Lord

114. *The Salesian’s spiritual life is sustained by the liturgical pedagogy of the Church, by a “fully conscious and active participation”*¹³³ *in liturgical celebrations and by an ongoing liturgical education in his community. Let every confrere take to heart the dignity of divine worship, respect for liturgical guidelines, and attentiveness to the singing, the gestures, and the symbols.*¹³⁴

115. *The **Eucharist** occupies a central place in the daily life of the Salesian and his community.*¹³⁵ *It conveys and reinforces the meaning of our apostolic consecration in terms of conforming us to Christ, strengthening brotherly communion and renewing our apostolic drive.*

*“All the members will be faithful to the daily celebration of the Eucharist.”*¹³⁶

¹²⁵ Cfr. PDV 50.

¹²⁶ GC24 178.

¹²⁷ Cfr. PO 16; GC21 39, 59.

¹²⁸ Cfr. R 68; SGC 675.

¹²⁹ Cfr. GC21 59.

¹³⁰ Cfr. R 44.

¹³¹ Cfr. R 50, 66.

¹³² Cfr. GC21 39, 58; PC 12; C 15.

¹³³ Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

¹³⁴ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*This is my Body, which is given for you*,” AGC 371 (2000), p. 51.

¹³⁵ Cfr. C 88.

¹³⁶ R 70.

116. Measures must be taken to cultivate a familiarity with the **Word of God**, a true school of ongoing formation, by making use of continual contact, prayerful reading, study and community sharing.

117. In personal and community life, emphasis should be laid on the educative and formative value of the sacrament of **Reconciliation** in accordance with our spirituality. The frequency of reception “should be decided in agreement with one’s own confessor, following the tradition of masters of the spirit and the laws of the Church”.¹³⁷ As a rule, religious “who are concerned about keeping united with God, should make the effort to approach the sacrament of [Reconciliation] frequently, that is, twice a month”.¹³⁸ During initial formation, considering the influence that a confessor’s guidance can have on vocation discernment and on the entire formation experience, the confreres should have a regular confessor who is ordinarily a Salesian.

118. The celebration of the **Liturgy of the Hours**, when properly attended to, contributes to strengthening the attitude of prayer and union with God.¹³⁹ “The members will celebrate Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer in common if possible.”¹⁴⁰ The confreres who are deacons and priests ought to be faithful “to the obligations assumed... at their ordination”¹⁴¹ and take part – by celebrating the various Hours – in the incessant praise that the Church raises to her Lord.

119. Special care should be given to education to **personal prayer** and to **mental prayer**, the participation in and animation of monthly recollections and annual spiritual retreats, which are the fundamental moments of Salesian spiritual pedagogy prompting an attitude of renewal and strengthening unity of life.¹⁴² “The community will devote at least three hours to the monthly recollection, and every three months a whole day will be given over to a suitably prepared retreat. Every year the members will make a retreat of six days in the manner laid down by the Provincial Chapter.”¹⁴³

120. Let the Provincial Commission for formation and the Rectors help the confreres to cultivate the **quality of their personal prayer**, and in a special way of the meditation made in common for at least half an hour.¹⁴⁴ They should encourage the knowledge and practice of methods that are suited to the characteristics of our spirituality.

121. In the course of the year, due importance should be given to **Marian feasts** according to the spirit of the liturgy, making use of the Marian devotions that are typical of the Salesian Family, especially the holy Rosary.¹⁴⁵

The feasts and memorials of the Saints and Blesseds of the Salesian Family should be celebrated with joy and full participation, praising the Lord for the gift of sanctity he has disseminated in our spiritual family and finding in the celebration a stimulus to imitation.

¹³⁷ CEC-Instruction, Liturgical formation in seminaries, 1979, 39; cfr. CRIS Decree *Dum canonicarum legum*, AAS 1971, 318-319.

¹³⁸ CRIS Decree *Dum canonicarum legum*, 1971, art. 3.

¹³⁹ Cfr. C 89.

¹⁴⁰ R 70.

¹⁴¹ C 89.

¹⁴² Cfr. C 91; R 72.

¹⁴³ R 72.

¹⁴⁴ Cfr. R 71.

¹⁴⁵ Cfr. C 92; R 74.

122. *Care must be taken of the moments of shared prayer with young people and the laity.*

123. *The methods and styles of prayer, the texts and other aids should preserve the Salesian characteristic of a prayer intimately joined to action; they should be open to “a well-balanced spontaneity and creativity in prayer, whether personal or communal”¹⁴⁶ and develop a special receptiveness towards forms of prayer that are joyful and appeal to youth and ordinary people.¹⁴⁷ They should contribute towards enlivening the spirit of the various celebrations and avoiding the effects of routine.*

3.3 INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

3.3.1 Reasons for its importance

124. *To live the Salesian vocation as one should, there arises an indispensable need for a solid and up-to-date intellectual formation based on serious study, one that develops the ability to reflect, to make judgements and to be discerning in the face of situations.*

Society today is in continual flux and persons are needed with an open and critical mind, an attitude of enquiry, a willingness to learn and to face new things, an ability to distinguish between what is permanent and what is changeable, a penchant for dialogue and a capacity for discernment.

It is only with the help of an intelligent approach to situations and an open outlook upon culture, an outlook rooted in the Word of God, in the mind of the Church and in the guidelines of the Congregation, that the Salesian can arrive at a *solidly motivated decision and experience concerning his own vocation*, and be able to live his Salesian identity and its human and religious significance with understanding and maturity, without oversimplifications or complexes. Otherwise he runs the risk of being led astray by ways of thinking or taking refuge in models of behaviour and forms of expression that are outmoded or inconsistent with his vocation.¹⁴⁸

125. In present-day society, *the thrust of the new evangelization* asks the Salesian to contribute to the dialogue between culture and faith according to his charism, and to devise more suitable methods for proclaiming the Word of God. For such a penetration of the Gospel in culture and society, what is needed is a deeper study of the mystery of God, the vocation of man and the contemporary situation in which he lives.

In particular, being called to operate in the youth field, he feels the need to become familiar with it and prepare himself for *a suitable and efficacious work of education and evangelization*. This means that he has to be continually alert and reflective, and also able to organize his mission of education into practical steps. Indispensable for him too are an enlightened pastoral outlook, pedagogical competence and a professional approach.

126. Furthermore, in carrying out the mission together with competent lay people, the Salesian finds himself entrusted with *the role of pastoral guide*; he holds the chief responsibility for ensuring

¹⁴⁶ GC21 45.

¹⁴⁷ Cfr. GC21 44.

¹⁴⁸ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*For you I study...*,” AGC 361 (1997), p. 37.

the Salesian identity of our initiatives and works, and he has to animate and form adults who are jointly responsible for the work of education.

While he may accomplish this task in different ways, depending on the works and the roles, he needs a better theoretical and practical knowledge of youth problems and educational methods; he also requires an ability to interact with adults on problems of life and faith, to communicate and lead, and to show particular competence when suggesting goals and educational approaches.

In addition, he has to live the Salesian spirit in a more convinced manner. The knowledge he has of the Preventive System must be comprehensive and acquired through reflection and experience, and he has to become much more aware of his own identity.¹⁴⁹

127. Finally, in the cultural upheaval in which we live, it has become all the more necessary to *link religious witness with human values* and with the challenges emerging from culture. “Within the consecrated life itself there is a need for a renewed and loving commitment to the intellectual life, for dedication to study as a means of integral formation and as a path of asceticism which is extraordinarily timely, in the face of present-day cultural diversity.”¹⁵⁰

3.3.2 The nature of intellectual formation

128. Intellectual formation is therefore *a fundamental component* of both initial and ongoing formation. The kind of intellectual formation we are referring to here is one that is *closely connected with the other aspects of formation*: religious and professional formation go together, and so do pastoral love and pedagogical competence; the experience of one’s Salesian vocation includes an effort to qualify oneself and become professional in one’s approach.¹⁵¹

“Study and piety,” wrote Don Bosco to a confrere, “will make you a true Salesian.”¹⁵² It was almost as if he said in different words: “Culture and spirituality will make of you an authentic educator and pastor of the young.”¹⁵³

129. Intellectual ability and, in particular, the ability to reflect, discern and form judgments are attitudes needing to be developed and therefore the object of constant attention.

Intellectual formation - we have to emphasize - is first of all *a way of living and working by learning from life*, by keeping oneself open to the challenges and demands of the situation (culture, Church, and Congregation), by devoting time to study and reflection and making use of the means and suggestions offered; it is being attentive and discerning in daily life and getting into the habit of performing one’s work with competence; it is fostering a community climate conducive to study, to a sharing of views, and to carrying out activities that are thought out, planned and verified.

It was Don Bosco’s conviction in his time, and it is the conviction of the Congregation today that a serious intellectual preparation is an irreplaceable means to help one live the Salesian vocation and mission faithfully.

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. *ibid.* p. 18.

¹⁵⁰ VC 98.

¹⁵¹ GC23 220-221.

¹⁵² BM XV, 14.

¹⁵³ Cfr. VECCHI J., “*For you I study...*,” AGC 361 (1997), p. 11; *La formazione intellettuale nell’ambito della formazione salesiana. Incontro promosso dal Dicastero per la formazione con la collaborazione della Facoltà di s. Teologia dell’UPS*, Rome 1981.

130. *The Salesian's intellectual formation comprises his basic formation, that is, the studies that form part of the different phases of initial formation, specialization or professional training, and ongoing formation.*

During the period of initial formation, intellectual formation, especially at certain periods, is given a special emphasis. This is in order to ensure a basic preparation and qualification, a pedagogical and pastoral mentality that is open and critical, an intelligent and well-founded Salesian frame of mind, and a permanent attitude of study and reflection.

Every Salesian, whether priest or brother, must acquire and develop a sound cultural foundation. On the other hand, *his specific vocation affects the programme of his studies*, determining the selection of subjects, the approach to them and their detailed planning. In the case of Salesian candidates to the priesthood, their specific curriculum is determined by the Church according to the needs of their cultural context.

It is also important that basic formation *take into account the starting condition of the candidates* which is so very diverse. We sometimes come across a certain weakness in terms of knowledge of material, general frame of mind and method of study, while at other times we find a person already professionally qualified.

3.3.3 Basic choices that govern the Salesian's intellectual formation

131. The Salesian's intellectual formation is governed by certain basic choices which need to be taken into account when organizing the period of initial formation (the curriculum, the programmes, the method, etc.).

3.3.3.1 SALESIAN COMPLEXION

Our Regulations explicitly underline the relationship between the identity of the Salesian and his intellectual formation when they state: "*Our Salesian mission orientates and characterizes at all levels the intellectual formation of the members in a way that is original and unique. Therefore the programme of studies must preserve a balance between serious and scientific reflection and the religious and apostolic dimensions of our way of life.*"¹⁵⁴ It follows then that the choosing of a particular arrangement, curriculum and study-centre is no indifferent matter when the formation of the confreres is at stake and we want to make sure they receive the pedagogical and pastoral preparation required by their Salesian vocation. We cannot leave the ordering of our studies to non-Salesian criteria.

3.3.3.2 INTERACTION BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE AND HARMONY WITH THE PREVAILING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

132. *Intellectual formation prepares one to deal with historical situations, especially with the youth situation, and consider them from the educative and pastoral point of view; it makes one*

¹⁵⁴ R 82.

capable of pastoral discernment and able to guide persons, plans and processes in conformity with the objectives of the mission.

As such, intellectual formation requires an initiation to the methodology of apostolic action. This is an interaction between theory and practice and can be put in a nutshell with the words, “reflection on experience”. Study and reflection are motivated and provoked by actual life, and practice is illuminated and guided by study and reflection.

3.3.3.3 UNITY AND COMPREHENSIVENESS

133. The unity and comprehensiveness characteristic of the whole process of formation are also typical features of intellectual formation insofar as it aims to unify one’s personal experience and provide a proper understanding of the mission.

In a cultural context that seems hardly interested in having fundamental principles as its reference points and stands out for its pluralism and complexity, *it is extremely necessary to offer a unified body of knowledge that gives one an open, well-founded and critical outlook on life*. Such a unified and comprehensive knowledge flows from an active synthesis of the contents of the various disciplines and approaches, and from a method of teaching and study that fosters assimilation and synthesis.

It leads the Salesian to understand the uniqueness of his vocation, as a reality constantly requiring a delicate interplay of nature and grace, knowledge and faith, the temporal order and the Kingdom of God.

3.3.3.4 CONTINUITY

134. The arrangement of intellectual formation also *keeps ongoing formation in view*, developing a habit of reflection and study, an openness to an exchange of views, a regard for the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation, and the effort to qualify oneself.

The continuity of intellectual formation helps the Salesian to know and live the turn of events spontaneously and to carry out an apostolate by involving himself in it. *By constantly developing his intellectual capacity*, he becomes capable of continuous learning, is able to seize on the most favourable opportunities for bringing himself up-to-date without limiting himself to those officially provided, and becomes better prepared for his mission as a Salesian educator and pastor of the young.

3.3.3.5 INCULTURATON¹⁵⁵

135. The concern for inculturation must be present in all the aspects of formation. In fact, inculturation bears on the relationship between the person, his roots and cultural make-up, and his vocation; its aim is to incarnate the charism and realize the educative and pastoral mission in different situations. From this point of view and for this purpose, it must have an impact on intellectual formation and the arrangement of studies.

¹⁵⁵ Cfr. PDV 55; VC 79-80; *Inculturazione e formazione salesiana*, prepared by the Department for formation and the Faculty of Theology of the UPS, Rome 1984.

Basing itself on the principles enunciated by the Church, which are connected with the mystery of the Incarnation and with Christian anthropology, and basing itself on a solid philosophical and theological foundation, an intellectual formation that is incultured and at the service of inculturation does not limit itself to simply adapting to situations. It reaches the person in his very roots and in the frame of reference he bears within himself; it enables him to face reality in an intelligent and critical manner, and highlights the particular points that need reflection and study.

136. Therefore, in “[laying] down the method of formation according to the needs of [each] cultural context”,¹⁵⁶ care is taken to see that the aspect of inculturation is present in the arrangement of studies. It leaves its mark particularly on philosophical formation, the arrangement of theological and pastoral studies, the area of evangelization, missionary action and ecumenical dialogue, inter-religious relations, and Salesian method and spirituality.

In postnovitiate studies where ample space is given to the human sciences, philosophical formation not only establishes some core statements connected with Christian revelation, but also remains open to a healthy pluralism in relation to various cultures. It avoids juxtaposition and syncretism, and forges a new incultured synthesis.

Theological formation (which includes dogmatic, pastoral, moral, spiritual, liturgical and other ramifications) pays attention to the challenges of the new evangelization in different settings and to the different ways of incarnating the pastoral ministry. It requires inculturation to be adopted as the criterion and mechanism of every pastoral reflection and methodology so as to prepare educators and evangelizers to handle the dialogue between Gospel and culture in harmony with the Church.

Reflection and study also accompany the inculturation of the values of the Salesian charism and spirituality; they help to incarnate their substance and typical expressions in the various cultures and point out the “different ways of living the one Salesian vocation”.¹⁵⁷

3.3.4 Subject areas

137. The experience of one’s vocation and the Salesian mission, in their unity and constitutive elements, are *a privileged criterion also for choosing the subject areas*, together with their internal structuring and connections. In addition to a solid basic culture, they call for a proper theological, philosophical and pedagogical approach, a particular consideration for some aspects of reality, and a study of “Salesianity”.

3.3.4.1 A SOLID BASIC CULTURE

138. To be able to meet and enter into dialogue with people having different experiences and competencies, every Salesian must have *a basic minimum culture*, which is the level of studies required of anyone who has finished the normal cycle of education in his country and is capable of organizing his knowledge in a way that makes sense and of communicating it.

“The very situation of the Church today demands increasingly that teachers be truly able to face the complexity of the times and that they be in a position to face competently, with clarity and

¹⁵⁶ C 101.

¹⁵⁷ C 100.

deep reasoning, the questions about meaning which are put by the people of today, questions which can only receive full and definitive reply in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”¹⁵⁸

It is necessary therefore that the Salesian possess a culture, that is, a sum total of ideas, understanding and values that is broad, open and at the same time critical, and *that he be as well qualified as possible in whatever concerns the Salesian mission*. As an educator and pastor of the young, he has to be in a position to effectively animate other educators and lay collaborators.

Taking into account the worldwide reach of the Congregation, the composition of the Regions and the groups of Provinces and the present-day tendencies in the world, it is clear how convenient it is today to have among one’s cultural accomplishments *a reasonable knowledge of one or more languages in addition to one’s own*, in order to overcome linguistic barriers and create possibilities of greater communication and collaboration.

3.3.4.2 *STUDYING THE FAITH MORE DEEPLY WITH THE HELP OF THEOLOGY*

139. By acquiring a basic qualification in the theological sciences and keeping up-to-date in them, a believer is able to have *an adequate understanding of the Christian mystery*, to knowingly engage in the dialogue between Gospel and culture, and to respond to the demands made on him by changing situations and the evolution of culture.

Theology is at the service of the faith, of the Church and of its inculturation. It is indissolubly linked with the life and history of the People of God and with the Magisterium that points the way; vital by nature, it has a notable impact on the mission of the Church and in particular on the spiritual life and pastoral ministry of her members.¹⁵⁹

Consequently, theological reflection helps the Salesian develop a love for Jesus Christ and his Church, gives his spiritual life a solid foundation, and empowers him for his educative and pastoral mission. The current situation requires that already during the initial phases of formation – but not only then – there be *a solid grounding in the faith* in terms of both knowing truths intellectually and experiencing a life based on the Gospel. Special attention is also to be paid to the theology of consecrated life.

3.3.4.3 *A COHERENT UNDERSTANDING OF MAN, THE WORLD AND GOD WITH THE HELP OF PHILOSOPHY*

140. The study of philosophy is indispensable for *a deeper understanding and interpretation of the person, and of the person’s freedom and relationships with the world and with God*.¹⁶⁰ It is indispensable too for the necessary ability to reflect and assess reality critically.

It helps in fact to develop *a coherent outlook on life* which gathers the various facets of experience into a harmonious whole, and it also assists in arriving at the truth and guaranteeing its certainty in a cultural situation which often exalts subjectivism as the criterion and measure of truth. It is seen as a necessary basis for the dialogue between the theological and the human sciences, for a critical understanding of the different cultures, for ensuring the rational underpinnings of the Christian mystery, and for permitting a discernment of the cultural forms in which the Gospel is to be proclaimed.

¹⁵⁸ PDV 56.

¹⁵⁹ Cfr. CEC, *La formazione teologica dei futuri sacerdoti*, 1976 passim.

¹⁶⁰ Cfr. JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et Ratio*, 60.

3.3.4.4 THE HUMAN SCIENCES AND THE SCIENCES OF EDUCATION

141. The human sciences, such as sociology, psychology, pedagogy, economics and politics, and the science of social communication, offer *a deeper understanding of man and the phenomena and lines of development of society*.¹⁶¹ They are indispensable for anyone called by his vocation to inculturate the Gospel in the life-situation of young people.

For the Salesian who in his period of formation assimilates the educative practice and pedagogical wisdom of the Congregation, the educational sciences are clearly an absolutely necessary part of his Salesian and professional training, and enjoy a privileged position because of their links with the Salesian mission and its specific objectives. *Catechesis*, which brings pastoral concern and pedagogical intuition together, occupies its own key position because the proclamation of Christ to the young is the reason for our existence as Salesians.

The increasingly widespread and powerful impact of *social communication* on almost all aspects of life, sectors of activity and relationships in society calls for a formation of the Salesian in the field of communication, a formation that will enable him to be acquainted with the instruments, their languages and their use, and acquire a critical sense and a methodological and educative capacity for communicating the message more effectively.

To ensure effectiveness in his educative and pastoral activity, it is also important for the Salesian to have a knowledge of *the social, political and economic situation* in which he lives and works and to consider the actual complex difficulties in the world of work, social problems, the new forms of poverty, and the social teaching of the Church.

3.3.4.5 “SALESIANITY”

142. To foster growth in Salesian identity, to penetrate the riches of the Founder’s charism, to live according to the mentality of the Congregation and the guidelines given for ensuring fidelity to the Salesian vocation, and to live this same Salesian vocation in a way suited to times and circumstances – all this entails *a knowledge and understanding, and therefore an intelligent, up-to-date and constant study of the spirituality, pedagogy, pastoral approach and history of the Congregation*.

Every Salesian has a permanent duty to cultivate an understanding of his own vocation and acquire the mind of the Congregation, thereby strengthening his own identity and becoming able to offer and communicate the Salesian charism and its values.

3.3.5 Specialization and professionalism

143. Besides a solid basic qualification, our vocation calls for an adequate professional competence, and this often entails a specialization. On the other hand, the context and the fields in which we work as well as the roles we take up, frequently require our qualifications to be officially

¹⁶¹ Cfr. PDV 52.

approved. Therefore, once the basic formation is assured, a further qualification and specialization becomes necessary.¹⁶²

While it is true that one can acquire competence in a particular sector by living and working, today a proper knowledge and specific preparation have become necessary to enhance the quality of daily activity and to avoid improvisation and superficiality in one's work.

Specialization builds on a person's gifts in view of his apostolic activity and aims at *enabling him to render a service marked by professionalism and competence*.

Every Salesian qualifies himself for the tasks of education and evangelization and for the role entrusted to him, especially when it is a responsibility of animation, government or formation in the local or provincial community.

144. In choosing specialized studies, consideration must be given to the aptitudes and inclinations of the confrere, but *the fundamental and priority criterion remains the concrete mission of the Congregation*. In this sense specialized studies should not be programmed with a view to achieving personal goals, but with a view to responding to the requirements of the apostolic commitments.¹⁶³

It is *the Province* which, in its programme of activities, and more specifically in its provincial plan for the preparation and specialization of its confreres, *identifies the areas and priorities for specialization* and spells out how they are to be realized.

Furthermore, after his specialization the confrere receives from the Province a certain *continuity and permanence* in the activity for which he is prepared and also the possibility of updating himself. On his part, he puts his qualification at the service of the common mission.

3.3.6 Study centres for formation

145. The arrangement and characteristics of the studies required for the Salesian's intellectual formation find an institutional response in the study centres. *The choice of a study centre* must correspond to the criteria of Salesian formation. For this reason the general Regulations invite the Provinces able to do so to have their own study centre.¹⁶⁴

As a matter of fact there exists in the Congregation *a diversity of structures* for Postnovitiate and Theology studies. There is the Salesian centre, either combined with a formation community (the "studentate") or functioning independently, and there is the non-Salesian centre or the centre for which Salesians share responsibility with others.

Many Salesian centres are open to students who do not belong to the Congregation.

Among the different kinds of study centres, *preference is to be given to the Salesian centre* which offers a programme of studies with a Salesian slant and a particular pastoral and pedagogical character, and favours a blending of intellectual formation with an overall formation plan and a special relationship of Salesian students with their teachers; it will also be necessary to ensure a good relationship between the study centre and the community.

146. *It is the duty of Provincials to look after their study centres*, to pay attention to their Salesian objectives and the quality of their academic service, and to furnish them with the necessary means. If they want the study centre to have a degree of excellence and to function properly, they have to

¹⁶² To take up other studies during initial formation in view of a further qualification or specialization, i.e. studies that go beyond those envisaged in the common curriculum, it is important to bear in mind the criteria and norms given by the *Ratio*.

¹⁶³ Cfr. MuR 26.

¹⁶⁴ Cfr. R 84.

be solicitous in the first place for its teaching staff, and therefore its academic structural organization as well as the preparation, permanence, rational deployment and necessary replacement of the personnel. They will have to insist on the need for everything to converge on Salesianity and for teachers to be qualified in those subjects that give the centre a Salesian complexion; they will have to encourage the teachers to be in touch with and involved in the action and reflection of the Congregation and of the Province.

One must also keep in mind that *Salesian centres can offer the Province and the local Church a qualified service* of spiritual, pastoral and cultural animation, such as: initiatives for the updating of confreres, members of the Salesian Family and the laity; professional advice for provincial and interprovincial bodies; research papers, publications, and the preparation of materials for use in animation; and various initiatives in conjunction with Church and religious bodies.

No doubt, a study centre can sometimes be a heavy burden for a Province. *Collaboration among the Provinces* is therefore advisable and oftentimes necessary.

When it proves impossible to frequent a Salesian study centre at the provincial and interprovincial level, a non-Salesian centre should be chosen on the basis of formation criteria, ensuring the necessary conditions and following the procedure laid down by the *Ratio*. In every case, such a choice must take into consideration the situation of the Province, the number of Salesian students, the nearness or otherwise of Salesian centres, and the context of the Church.

147. Among the various Salesian study centres, pride of place goes to the *Salesian Pontifical University* for the special mission it carries out at the service of the Church and the Congregation by preparing qualified personnel. “The present development of the Congregation and its worldwide expansion, the challenges facing its mission and the need to improve the quality of its pedagogical and pastoral effort, the context of the new evangelization and of inculturation, the concern for fostering communion and the regard for the different ways of expressing our charism – all these various elements highlight the great importance and relevance of the function of the UPS within the framework of Salesian reality.”¹⁶⁵

The UPS has *a special relationship with some Salesian study centres* in the form of affiliation or aggregation. This has been a constructive experience and has proved useful in enhancing the quality of studies, the exchange of ideas and collaboration, and the role of teachers.

3.3.7 Some suggestions to promote intellectual formation

148. The commitment to intellectual formation must be a constant feature of the life of every Salesian. Such a commitment finds encouragement and practical expression in certain attitudes which the Salesian ought to cultivate:

- the Salesian makes *enthusiasm for his vocation, stemming from pastoral love, a powerful motivation* for his intellectual formation. He nourishes a love for study, devotes time to it and makes use of the opportunities offered him; he considers study an efficacious instrument for the mission;
- he takes pains to forge *a synthesis of faith, culture and life*, of education and evangelization, of secular and pastoral values;

¹⁶⁵ Vecchi J. Report of the Vicar General to the GC24, 229.

- he lives his intellectual formation as *self-formation, especially from the standpoint of ongoing formation*, that is, as an attitude and personal commitment: he makes use of reflection, sharing and group encounters;
- aware of the demands of the mission, he *works hard* to develop a genuine interest in cultural matters, to make his Salesian identity the guiding principle of his efforts to bring himself up-to-date and mature intellectually, and to acquire a mentality of reflection and discernment concerning the signs of the times and the new phenomena arising in youth cultures;
- he *finds in his community*, at provincial and at local level, a stimulus and a help for his intellectual formation; the community in fact projects itself as a setting rich in Salesian values and open to life and culture. He finds it especially helpful to “reflect on experience” together with the educative and pastoral community, within the framework of the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan;
- during his initial formation, he *assumes responsibility for his own intellectual formation*. With a generous and apostolic spirit he accepts the asceticism involved in serious study, fatiguing scientific work, diligence and concentration. He takes an active part in the classroom, in groups and in various academic and cultural initiatives, and is happy to meet with his teachers. He makes his own the motivations and aims of each discipline and scholastic activity in which he finds himself engaged;
- he receives an introduction to the *methodology of apostolic action*, and learns to combine pastoral exercises with intellectual formation in a way that creates a comprehensive experience; in this way he avoids the risks of being abstract or concerned with immediate results.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

Objectives and Salesian complexion

149. “***Our Salesian mission orientates and characterizes at all levels the intellectual formation of the members in a way that is original and unique. Therefore the programme of studies must preserve a balance between serious and scientific reflection and the religious and apostolic dimensions of our way of life.***”¹⁶⁶

Let every confrere be offered a solid theological, pedagogical and professional formation that takes into account the different forms of the Salesian vocation and also the norms laid down by the Church.

150. *With the help of a constant reflection on his practical experiences, the interdependent contribution of the various study disciplines, and the acquisition of the necessary skills, let the Salesian form in himself a pedagogical and pastoral mentality and become able to meet adequately the tasks and challenges proper to the mission.*

¹⁶⁶ R 82.

151. *Intellectual preparation must form in the Salesian an “open and discerning mentality”¹⁶⁷ that enables him to understand the situation, especially that of the young and the poor; it must develop in him the spirit of initiative,¹⁶⁸ and induce him “to keep abreast of new trends and meet them with the well-balanced creativity of the Founder”.*¹⁶⁹

Personal commitment to intellectual formation

152. *Let every Salesian form the habit of reflecting on his practical experiences, alone and in community, and also the habit of reading. Let him make the most of the updating opportunities offered him by his local community, the Province and the Church. And let him see to acquiring the educational qualifications called for by his task of educating the young, his role of animator, and the challenges of his situation: he needs to keep himself always better prepared to fulfil the common mission.*

“Let every confrere study with his superiors the field of further qualifications best suited to his abilities and to the needs of the Province, giving preference to whatever concerns our mission. He should preserve that availability which is characteristic of our spirit, and be ready for periodic requalification.”¹⁷⁰

At the level of the Congregation

153. *Studies in the Congregation are governed by:*

- *the documents of the Church which, directly or indirectly, concern ecclesiastical studies and the intellectual formation of religious;*
- *our Constitutions and general Regulations, the General Chapters, the Rector Major with his Council, this Ratio and the approved Provincial Directories.*

154. *In the Congregation intellectual formation is the direct concern of the Rector Major with his Council. It comes under the specific care of the General Councillor for formation.¹⁷¹ The following are the services that belong to him:*

- *the fostering of those studies that are called for by the particular characteristics of the Congregation;*
- *concern for the preparation of personnel and verification of the Provincial plan for the preparation and specialization of the confreres;*
- *the care of Salesian study centres and of the personnel who work in them;*
- *evaluation of the choices made of non-Salesian study centres and of the affiliations of Salesian study centres to Salesian and non-Salesian establishments.*

155. *Centres of higher studies, such as Academies and Faculties of Theology, Philosophy and Pedagogy that depend on our Congregation, must draw their inspiration, as far as Salesian students are concerned, from the criteria and directives of this Ratio.*

156. *Encouragement should be given to the study of Italian as a means of knowing the sources and reading the documents, and as an element of communication in the Congregation, especially in contacts and gatherings at an international level.*

¹⁶⁷ R 99.

¹⁶⁸ Cfr. *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ C 19.

¹⁷⁰ R 100.

¹⁷¹ Cfr. C 135.

*The study of **other languages** too is to be promoted insofar as they are useful for communication from the pastoral and Salesian point of view.*¹⁷²

At the provincial level

157. *For the purpose of maintaining unity in intellectual formation, the **formation section of the Provincial Directory** should contain the guidelines and basic decisions concerning the curriculum of studies, keeping in mind the norms of the Congregation, the requirements of the mission and the context of the Province. It should also contain directives pertaining to the study centres which are frequented by confreres in the different phases of formation and indicate steps to ensure the Salesian character of those centres. The Provincial Formation Plan should spell out in detail whatever pertains to the curriculum of studies.*

158. *Let the Province draw up its **Provincial Plan for the preparation and specialization** of its confreres on the basis of the criteria laid down in the Directory and as a part of the Provincial Formation Plan. That Plan (for qualifying the confreres) should be re-examined and verified from time to time by the Provincial Commission for formation, and forwarded to the General Councillor for formation.*

During the period of initial formation

159. *Intellectual preparation forms a **unifying element** in all the phases of initial formation. It plays an important role in the arrangement of the general programme and in the allocation of time to the immediate postnovitiate (at least two years), to the specific formation of Salesians preparing for the priesthood (four years), and to an analogous specific formation of Salesian brothers (at least one year).*¹⁷³

160. *During initial formation a Salesian complexion must be given to the arrangement of studies, and a gradual and systematic study of specifically Salesian subjects is to be fostered.*¹⁷⁴

*With regard to the **Salesian complexion** of the arrangement of studies, care should be taken of the following aspects:*

- the basic, unifying concern for forming a Salesian educator and pastor;*
- the effective correspondence between the arrangement of studies and the needs of Salesian life and mission;*
- the presence of suitably prepared confreres who, starting in their own area of qualification, assist the student confreres in grasping the Salesian angle in their studies and are in a position to sensitize those responsible for non-Salesian centres on this issue.*

*With regard to the **study of specifically Salesian subjects**:*

- there should be a gradual and systematic study of Salesian subjects (Salesian history, pedagogy, spirituality and the basic features of Salesian Youth Pastoral work), implementing what is laid down in the formation section of the Provincial Directory and in the Provincial Formation Plan;*

¹⁷² Cfr. ASC 276, p. 78; GC21 153d; VECCHI J., "For you I study...", AGC 361 (1997), p. 40.

¹⁷³ Cfr. The Salesian Brother, p. 217.

¹⁷⁴ Cfr. R 85; *Gli studi di "salesianità" durante la formazione iniziale*, a seminar organized by the Department for Formation, Rome 1993.

- when the confreres frequent a Salesian study centre, the responsibility for teaching these subjects is ordinarily divided between the academic authorities and those of the formation community;

- when the confreres frequent a non-Salesian study centre, this responsibility is assumed by the formation community, unless it is discharged by the centre itself.

Those responsible for intellectual formation

161. **The confrere** in formation must consider himself as bearing the prime responsibility for his intellectual preparation. Therefore:

- he should be regular in his attendance at lessons, and prepare diligently for his seminars, dissertations and examinations;¹⁷⁵

- he should be open to an exchange of views and to group sharing, and taken an active part in the academic and cultural initiatives of his own study centre;

- he should make an effort, with the help of his teachers, to be proficient in the art of reflection and acquire a method of study that is in keeping with the spirit of ongoing formation.

162. **The Rector and others responsible for formation** must take pains to follow the intellectual formation of the confrere, keep themselves informed, speak with the academic authorities, and carry out an assessment from time to time.

The presence of qualified confreres, possibly teachers, in the formation community must always be ensured: they can help to give unity to studies and the formation experience.

163. **The confrere who is a teacher** is aware of his specific formative function. On this account he shows interest in the intellectual progress of the students and helps them to develop their talents, keeping in mind the objectives and the pastoral and pedagogical demands of Salesian activity.

He must subordinate his cultural and apostolic services in the Province and the local Church to those he has been called upon to offer to the student confreres. He must also commit himself to a systematic effort to keep himself up to date in his own line of specialization.

164. **Non-Salesian teachers**, be they ecclesiastics, religious or lay persons, who are called to render their services in Salesian centres, must be chosen in the light of their scientific and pedagogical preparation, the criteria and conditions laid down by the Church and the Congregation, and in particular, their compliance with Church guidelines and their witness of life.¹⁷⁶

Methodology

165. The methodology of studies and of teaching must make room for a valid anthropological and interdisciplinary approach, for methods that foster the ability to reflect, dialogue and discuss, a discerning mind and an attitude of continuing intellectual formation. Teachers and students should apply themselves to their intellectual work with all seriousness, keeping a synthesis always in view and aiming to create a pastoral and pedagogical mentality.

166. In the arrangement of academic work:

- there must be a sufficient number of lessons in the core subjects to allow for a presentation of the material concerned and general guidelines for personal study;

¹⁷⁵ Cfr. RFIS 93.

¹⁷⁶ Cfr. CIC can. 809, 810, 812; GC24 164.

- seminars and practical exercises should be conducted to foster the active participation of the students;
- the teachers should impart a serious method of scientific work;¹⁷⁷
- personal study should be encouraged in various ways.

Study centres

167. *De facto*, there exists in the Congregation a **diversity of structures** for the Postnovitiate (in some cases frequented also by prenovices) and Theology studies:

- the Salesian study centre combined with a formation community (the “studentate”) or functioning independently; in both these cases the centre can be frequented by Salesian students and by other religious, diocesan or lay students;
- the non-Salesian centre, belonging to the Church or to the State, and frequented by confreres who are members of a formation community; in some cases, the study centre is run by the Salesians in collaboration with other Institutes or with the Diocese.

168. Between the two types of study centres mentioned above – the Salesian centre and the non-Salesian centre – **the Salesian centre is ordinarily to be preferred**.¹⁷⁸ This preference underlines the importance of an arrangement that makes for the combination of, and convergence between, intellectual formation and the overall programme of formation within a Salesian frame of reference.

Such a convergence can come about either in the form of a formation community having its own study centre (“the studentate”) or in the form of a separation of a formation community from a Salesian study centre, provided there is a close collaboration between the two in order to achieve the common objective of formation.

The Salesian centre has an added advantage for formation in that it provides the possibility for a sharing of life and reflection between teaching confreres and student confreres, and offers a competent service for ongoing formation in the Province.

169. The preference for a Salesian study centre does not mean that it must be reserved only for Salesians. The Regulations themselves say that “as far as it is possible **it should also be open** to externs, religious and lay, as a service to the particular Church.”¹⁷⁹

This openness, while safeguarding the centre’s identity and standard of excellence, holds advantages for formation, such as sharing, collaboration and a greater number of students.

170. “The Provinces able to do so should have their own study centre for the formation of the confreres and to provide qualified services of spiritual, pastoral and cultural animation.”¹⁸⁰

The Salesian study centres need to be supported, and steps have to be taken to ensure that they maintain their excellence in academic matters and in formation, that they are sufficiently staffed by teams of qualified personnel, and that this personnel enjoys a certain permanence in the institution. To transfer confreres who form part of the permanent teaching body of a Salesian study centre the Provincial needs to have an understanding with the Councillor for formation.

Taking into account the quality and the structure of the centre, the various academic roles and bodies (president, council, college of teachers, assembly of students, etc.) should be defined and made to function correctly. Every Salesian study centre should have its own statutes and regulations inspired by the Ratio.

¹⁷⁷ Cfr. RFIS 91.

¹⁷⁸ Cfr. GC21 282, 283, 441.

¹⁷⁹ R 84.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

171. *There should be a determined and serious **collaboration on the interprovincial level** in establishing Salesian study centres and ensuring that they have all the necessary conditions to function well, especially when such an arrangement would not be possible on the provincial level.*

172. ***Between the study centre and the Salesian community**, ways and means of **communication** should be fostered (such as meetings between academic and religious authorities, between teachers and students, etc.).*

In the case of a “studentate”, depending on the concrete situation, the areas of competence of the study centre (regulations, academic bodies, premises, and financing) and those of the formation community must be adequately distinguished one from the other, but harmoniously linked together, according to the norms of the Constitutions and general Regulations.

*There should also be an “institutional” **linkage between the study centre, the formation community and the Province** in which it is situated. This linkage may take the form of:*

- periodic meetings of the authorities of the study centre and of the formation community (the president and the Rector) with the Provincial and if required, his Council, to consider important questions concerning the teaching body, the programming and execution of study plans, the library, the administrative sector, and the day-to-day functioning of the study centre or studentate;

- a “management committee” made up of those responsible at the level of the Province, of the formation community and of the centre itself. Its task will be to consider the more important problems.

173. *“When the study centre is interprovincial, the Provinces concerned shall give their responsible collaboration to enable it to achieve its aim.”¹⁸¹*

***Interprovincial collaboration** for a studentate or study centre implies the creation and proper functioning of an entity holding shared responsibility (for example, a “curatorium”). Such an entity is made up of the Provincials directly concerned, the president, the Rector of the formation community/communities, the administrator and other members as envisaged in the statutes. It has the following tasks:*

- to define clearly the rights and duties of the Provinces involved, the role of the local Provincial of the centre and of the other Provincials concerned;

- to spell out in practical terms the areas and forms of collaboration between the study centre and the Provinces supporting it;

- to follow the arrangement of the studies and academic activity;

- to study and offer guidance to the competent superiors concerning the teaching personnel and students;

- to see that the guidelines and norms of the Holy See regarding centres for ecclesiastical studies are followed;

- to maintain contact with the General Councillor for formation.

174. *For a Province to take up and **share responsibility** with other ecclesiastical or civil institutions in **governing and running study centres**, the approval of the Rector Major is necessary. Let the confreres who work in such study centres be adequately qualified so as to be able to render a valid and significant service.*

175. *It is strongly recommended that the theological study centres belonging to the dioceses or religious Institutes and frequented by our confreres be affiliated to a Faculty of Theology.¹⁸²*

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

176. *The approval of the Rector Major is needed for the **affiliation** of a Salesian study centre to non-Salesian institutions.*

177. ***Affiliations** and other forms of connection of Salesian study centres **with the Faculties of the Salesian Pontifical University** are to be encouraged. If properly arranged by the centre itself and by the University, they are concerned with much more than the administration of academic matters and contribute to a more serious level of studies, the qualification of personnel, dialogue between the different centres of the Congregation, unity of purpose and collaboration.*

It belongs to the Rector Major, as Grand Chancellor of the Salesian Pontifical University, to authorize the start of a process of affiliation and to forward the official request to the Congregation for Catholic Education, after the competent academic authorities have completed the required verifications and given their consent.

The deans of the Faculties of the UPS and those responsible for the affiliated centres will keep the General Councillor for formation periodically informed about the effective functioning of the affiliation or other forms of union.

178. *When it proves impossible to frequent a Salesian study centre, even at interprovincial level, a **non-Salesian study centre should be chosen** which complies with the guidelines of the Church and is better able to cater to the needs and emphases¹⁸³ that characterize the individual phases of our formation process.*

For the immediate postnovitiate in particular, those non-Salesian study centres should be preferred which better link philosophy with the human sciences, and for the phase of specific formation for the priesthood those centres which are best able to contribute to the formation of a priest who will be a pastor and educator. The formation benefits of this arrangement should be periodically assessed.

The choice of a non-Salesian study centre requires a prior dialogue with the General Councillor for formation and the approval of the Rector Major.

179. *In the formation section of its Directory, every Province must indicate the study centre it has chosen for the formation of its confreres, and give reasons for the choice on the basis of its own particular circumstances.*

180. *When confreres **frequent a non-Salesian study centre**, the following steps must be taken to ensure that the formation objectives are attained, according to the possibilities and concrete circumstances:*

- *the student confreres must strive, individually and as a group, to assimilate the knowledge content offered by the study centre in a context of synthesis and within the framework of their Salesian vocation;*

- *there must be a relationship between those responsible for the formation community and the academic authorities;*

- *there must be a competent Salesian to follow the intellectual formation of the confreres who frequent such a centre and, if possible, some confreres to teach at the same centre or take part in its direction;*

- *Salesian history, pedagogy, pastoral work and spirituality must be the object of specific and systematic courses which are either incorporated in the curriculum of the centre or conducted within the formation community.*

¹⁸² JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, *Sapientia christiana*, 1979, art. 62,2; henceforward abbreviated to "*Sapientia christiana*".

¹⁸³ Cfr. GC21 262.

Legal recognition of the basic curriculum and other studies

181. *The studies envisaged by the basic curriculum of the years of initial formation “should be so structured as **to lead to degrees and qualifications** recognized by the State, whenever that is possible.”*¹⁸⁴ *The Provincial plan for the preparation and specialization of the confreres will keep this requirement in mind.*

182. *With regard to the possibility of **pursuing, during the period of initial formation, other studies** which are not part of the basic curriculum, also with a view to obtaining degrees, one has to keep in mind the duty of first meeting the requirements of the phase of formation that the confrere is going through and of giving priority to the completion of the basic curriculum. In case of real incompatibility, absolute precedence must be given to the demands of formation.*

When it is possible to harmonize respect for the demands of formation and dedication to other studies, the confrere must apply himself to them with a spirit of responsibility and sacrifice, and the Provincial and the Rector must see to the required follow-up and periodic assessment.

183. *Attention must be paid to the norm issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education which prohibits the simultaneous frequenting as ordinary students of two Universities or centres of higher studies during philosophical and theological studies.*¹⁸⁵ *Therefore, in the different phases of formation, the confreres in formation are to be enrolled as ordinary students in only one University-level institute.*

184. *There are Provinces that during the years of initial formation, before or after Practical Training, **allot a certain number of years** which do not coincide with the other phases of formation, for the brothers and clerics to complete their **study qualifications**. They should carefully assess the situation of formation of the confrere concerned, make a prudent choice of the study centre, guarantee the confrere a proper community environment and not leave him without suitable formative guidance.*

3.4 FORMATION FOR YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY

185. *The Salesian is formed to live Don Bosco’s project in the Church, which is: to be a sign and bearer of the love of God for young people, especially the poorest among them.*¹⁸⁶

Since the whole of his formation is directed by this mission and enables him to live it, its unique characteristic is the formation to youth pastoral ministry. In fact, this is the final objective and point of convergence of the other aspects of formation: keeping them all in a vital unity, it determines their contents, approaches and procedures, and gives to each of them a youth pastoral slant.

And so, the service of youth, which is an essential part of apostolic consecration, necessarily requires the Salesian to possess human qualities, a good level of culture, professional competence and spiritual depth.

The Salesian mission draws its inspiration from the Preventive System and becomes concrete in Salesian Youth Ministry. It is on the basis of these two elements – the Preventive

¹⁸⁴ R 83.

¹⁸⁵ CEC, Norms of application for the correct implementation of the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia christiana*, 1979, art. 25.

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. C 2.

System and Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry – that the youth pastoral aspect of formation takes shape.¹⁸⁷

3.4.1 Formation for the practice of the Preventive System, the incarnation of the Salesian mission

186. The Salesian educator and pastor of youth trains himself to *live the style of life and action of Don Bosco and his first disciples*, the Salesian spirit; that spirit was incarnated in Don Bosco's spiritual and educational experience in the Oratory of Valdocco: he called it the "Preventive System". It belongs to the very essence of our mission; it can practically be considered a synthesis of what Don Bosco wanted to be and to live for young people. For this reason it forms an essential frame of reference for Salesian formation.

The formation and the accomplishment of the mission in line with the Preventive System entails:

- training for *a spiritual experience* which has its source and centre in God's love, predisposes one to welcome and serve God in the young, and creates an educational relationship with them in order to guide them towards the fullness of life;
- making one *capable of evangelization* by drawing on the natural and supernatural endowments each young person receives from God, and in a welcoming atmosphere that is full of life, teaching him the way to a unique form of Christian life and youthful holiness, Salesian Youth Spirituality;
- adoption of *a pedagogical method* whose characteristics are:
 - . a loving and empathic *presence* among the young;
 - . an unconditional *acceptance* of each young person and a personal encounter with him;
 - . the application of the *preventive criterion*, that is, an attempt to develop the young person's resources by offering him positive experiences of goodness and virtue;
 - . the appeal to *reason* understood as a reasonable approach in the programmes offered him and as the richness of all that is human;
 - . *religion* as a means to cultivate the sense of God within every person and as a source of energy for Christian evangelization;
 - . *loving-kindness* as a love that expresses itself in fostering growth through education and that evokes a response;
 - . a healthy *environment*, enlivened by the animation of educators working in a spirit of shared responsibility and by the direct involvement of the young people themselves;¹⁸⁸
- *application of the working model to our various works and services* and our "new forms of Salesian presence among the young", especially the Salesian Youth Movement, with due regard for the specific nature of each setting.¹⁸⁹

3.4.2 Formation for Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry, the realization of the Preventive System

¹⁸⁷ Cfr. DEPARTMENT FOR SALESIAN YOUTH APOSTOLATE, A Manual for Salesian Youth Ministry, First edition, Rome 1998.

¹⁸⁸ Cfr. A Manual for Salesian Youth Ministry, p. 16-17.

¹⁸⁹ Cfr. *ibid.*, Part II.

187. In carrying out its mission with dynamic fidelity, the Congregation with its experience has devised a practical way of effecting its educative and pastoral activity according to the Preventive System in the midst of the young: it is *Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry*.

To form and to fulfil the mission means to assume those elements that define the Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry:

- a *decisive option for young people*, especially those who are poor: this option permeates all our ways of thinking and acting;

- a *unified process* of educating and evangelizing young people: such a process aims at their complete salvation - in their reality as human beings and their call to be sons of God ("honest citizens and good Christians"); it comprises *four characteristic aspects*: that of education and culture, that of evangelization and catechesis, that of group experience, and the vocation aspect;¹⁹⁰

- a *specific style of animation* and the *oratorian criterion* applied to the various works and services;

- a process lived in an *Educative and Pastoral community* (EPC) in which the Salesian community is the animating nucleus, helping everyone to be responsible by respecting and coordinating the various roles and fulfilling one's own;

- a Youth Ministry accomplished according to a *Plan* (the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan: SEPP): the plan is the practical way in which the educative community proposes to live Don Bosco's charism, incarnating it in its social and ecclesial situation and choosing the appropriate priorities, objectives, strategies, interventions, and forms of participation and evaluation.

3.4.3 The values and attitudes proper to youth pastoral formation

188. To form the Salesian educator and pastor along the lines indicated, it is necessary to give particular attention to fostering and inculcating certain elements:

3.4.3.1 A LOVE FOR, AND PRESENCE AMONG, THE YOUNG, ESPECIALLY THE POOREST

To be a Salesian means *to have affection for young people*, especially for those who are poorest, at risk and who find themselves on the margins of the Church. It means to cultivate the gift of a predilection for the young which makes him:

- approach them with a friendly attitude and a readiness to share;
- accept them without conditions and prejudices, acknowledging and drawing out the potential that lies within them;

- walk side by side with them, adjusting to their pace and rhythm of life;
- help them to grasp the richness of life and its values, preparing them to face real life and making them aware of permanent values.¹⁹¹

The predilection for the young leads the Salesian to take an interest in the working-class surroundings in which they live, to read the situation from their point of view, and to respond to it in ways that have significance for the Church and the locality.

¹⁹⁰ Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁹¹ Cfr. *ibid.*, p. 17.

3.4.3.2 AN INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION WITH EVANGELIZATION

189. The service we offer the young is education and evangelization “according to a plan for the total well-being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man”, as our Constitutions say.¹⁹² Therefore educational activity and evangelizing activity are not two successive steps; instead, *pastoral concern always forms an integral part of the process of human development*, and the latter is open and directed towards the Gospel.

This requires the Salesian to:

- start out from the standpoint of faith: life is a gift in which God is present;
- direct the whole process of educating the young in a positive manner so as to lead to an encounter with Christ and his Gospel;
- promote the human advancement of the person and the social development of the area;
- bring Gospel values and Christian vitality to animate the process of young people’s growth to maturity (formation to responsible freedom, the formation of conscience, social formation);
- foster a dynamic faith, one that permeates a person’s culture and development in such a way as to create in him a vital synthesis of faith and culture.

3.4.3.3 THE COMMUNITARIAN NATURE OF SALESIAN MINISTRY

190. The Salesian’s activity for the benefit of the young is always *a communitarian activity*. It is lived as a joint responsibility within the religious community and the educative and pastoral community, within the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement.

This is why the Salesian develops a sense of “working together” amidst a diversity of tasks and roles, an awareness of being part of an animating nucleus, and a feeling of responsibility in contributing “to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness”.¹⁹³

3.4.3.4 AN ANIMATING STYLE

191. Our style of working is one of *animation*, and this requires us to:

- place our confidence in the person and in his resources to attain what is good; he becomes the key figure and prime mover in all that concerns him;
- set out from the point at which the person finds himself and open him up to new horizons with helpful ideas and suggestions; for this, the rapport with him must be one of loving-kindness: this creates an atmosphere of freedom and facilitates the development of his energies;
- maintain strong interpersonal relationships in a serene and welcoming environment in which the person feels at home, is able to express himself and assumes responsibility for his own growth, making free decisions based on sound reasons and values;
- foster involvement, participation, and shared responsibility.

¹⁹² C 31.

¹⁹³ C 5.

3.4.3.5 AN OUTLOOK FOCUSED ON A STRUCTURED MINISTRY AND OVERALL PLANNING

192. Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry is *a structured ministry* because it brings together various activities and initiatives aiming at the integral formation of the young and because there are common aims and lines of action in the EPC and all contributions are integrated and complement each other.

This calls for a way of thinking and acting that promotes a linkage and a convergence among all the persons and elements that have a part to play in the educative and pastoral action.

More precisely, it requires:

- a comprehensive outlook, which finds expression in the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan;
- an aptitude to work according to the various areas of the Plan;
- an ability to organize pastoral animation in such a way that it enhances communication, coordination and team-work.¹⁹⁴

3.4.4 Some lines of action for formation to youth pastoral ministry

3.4.4.1 FORMATION FOR YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY

3.4.4.1.1 Responding to the Lord's call in the needs of young people

193. Inspired by God's example of love and self-giving in answering men's needs, and imitating Don Bosco who walked the streets to reach out to youth in their situation, the Salesian *feels in his heart the appeals that come from the young*, especially from those who find themselves in conditions of poverty and suffering.

Through a process of discernment which he carries out with the assistance of the Spirit, he grasps the theological significance of the challenges coming from the world of the young. *In their cries for help he learns to recognize the voice of God* the Saviour calling him. In this way he enters into a dialogue with the Lord, bringing the young too into this dialogue and placing his whole life at their service.

The awareness of being called and sent by God to meet him in the young and to work for their liberation and evangelization helps him to acquire the mentality of an apostle, and it gives unity to all his life.

3.4.4.1.2 Concern for the world of education

194. Faced with the challenges of the new evangelization, the Salesian *feels the need for a solid preparation* and a strong effort to acquire culture. Oftentimes it is the civil and legal requirements, the needs of the world of education and the educational issues in the areas in which he works that require the Salesian to become qualified.

¹⁹⁴ Cfr. A Manual for Salesian Youth Ministry, p. 18-22.

And so, reflection, study and continual updating are his responsibility by virtue of his vocation and profession, especially in the areas which are closer to the specific Salesian mission, such as pedagogy and catechesis.

3.4.4.1.3 Theological and pastoral reflection and the guidelines of the Church

195. *The Salesian's whole intellectual formation is characterized by its pastoral outlook.* He particularly studies Pastoral Theology, and in studying other disciplines finds a connection with pastoral action. He receives encouragement and instruction from the guidelines of the universal and particular Church, above all from those that concern the area of his mission to the young.

3.4.4.1.4 The acceptance of Salesian pastoral guidelines

196. The Salesian *becomes deeply rooted in the Salesian charism* by applying himself seriously to the study of the Preventive System and its translation in Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry, particularly in Salesian Youth Spirituality.

It is important for him to have a good knowledge of the guidelines of recent General Chapters, the pastoral directives issued by the Rector Major and his Council, by the Department for Youth Pastoral Ministry, and by his Province.

Professional studies and specialization in the various fields of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry are necessary and useful, as also are the acquisition of competencies and skills in other fields (animation, leadership and group dynamics).

3.4.4.1.5 Formation in the day-to-day experience of the mission

197. Though basic formation and extraordinary initiatives have their own proper value and necessary importance, the fact remains that *it is the day-to-day experience of living the mission in the local and provincial community that offers the Salesian the setting and the most efficacious means for his formation* as a Salesian educator and apostle. In his daily life he experiences pastoral discernment, planning and assessment, shared responsibility and collaboration, prayer and the spirituality of the mission.¹⁹⁵

It is in the same educative and pastoral community that he learns and feels impelled to give a joyful witness of his religious, community and apostolic life; he strives to live the fundamental elements of his Salesian identity; he offers his loyal collaboration to the various entities holding joint responsibility; he takes an active part in the processes of formation under way in the EPC; and he shows concern for the growth of the Salesian vocation in young people and in the collaborators.

3.4.4.2 PASTORAL ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD OF INITIAL FORMATION

198. In line with Salesian tradition, “throughout the whole period of initial formation” – so we read in our Constitutions – “*importance is given not only to study but also to the pastoral activities*

¹⁹⁵ Cfr. GC24 237.

of our mission,”¹⁹⁶ even if, methodologically speaking, priority is accorded during certain phases to activities that are theoretical and are a part of basic training in order to achieve some specific formation objectives. A typical and particular expression of a formation experience through Salesian pastoral ministry is practical training.

Pastoral activities aim at formation to the apostolate. If well-planned and guided, they help to achieve some *specific formation objectives*:

- growth in an *awareness of the situation of young people* and the acquisition of a habit of considering their condition from the point of view of salvation;
- training in *skills needed for educative and pastoral work*, particularly Salesian assistance, and the animation of groups;
- *growth to maturity in one's vocation*, as one weighs the possibilities and the difficulties encountered in the process of living up to Salesian apostolic ideals. It is while living out the mission that one learns to examine one's attitudes, motives and abilities, and make the effort to harmonize them with the requirements of the mission;
- *integration of the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and operational aspects of the experience in one's life* with a view to arriving at a balance between work and prayer, between action and contemplation, between theory and practice, between concern for the individual and concern for the group, between consecration and mission;
- *personal experience of the Salesian mission* in different works and activities, openness to the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement, and growth in a sense of shared responsibility at work in keeping with the demands of an “structured ministry” and team-work.

199. The interaction between theory and practice is a constant methodological factor in the process of formation. On the one hand, it is important that activity (practice) have a formative purpose, that is to say, that it be thought out, realized and assessed in the light of the formation objective chosen; at the same time, reflection (theory) on all the ideas and principles taken together must exert an influence on a person's outlook and experience, on his mentality, criteria for action, and motivations which sustain his plan of life and his approach to the situation.

To ensure that the pastoral experiences do attain their formation purposes, *certain conditions* have to be met:

- the activities must form *part of the Provincial Formation Plan*, wherein are spelt out the responsibilities and the educative and pastoral activities for different phases, using a diversified and graded approach;
- they must *relate to the Salesian mission* and ordinarily be carried out in Salesian works and youth environments where one can learn to work with a comprehensive outlook, to live the organic unity of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry, to work in community and with lay people, and to be an animator;
- they must be *formative in nature*, suited to the Salesian's age, maturity and needs of formation, and altered according to the different forms of the Salesian vocation. The programme of activities should be drawn up together with the confreres in formation and pay attention to various elements: analysis of the situation, objectives, methods, strategies, deadlines and assessments;
- there should be *a qualified guide* who has sufficient competence to assess situations and the necessary ascendancy to stimulate in those he is guiding the process of growing in values;
- *a serious and systematic assessment* should be made, both by the confreres in formation and by those responsible for formation.

¹⁹⁶ C 115.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

200. *Let every community examine itself and study the contents of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry; let it keep itself up-to-date with regard to the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation.*

201. *Each confrere finds particular opportunities for ongoing formation in:*
- *his responsible participation in animating his own educative and pastoral community;*
- *“working together” with confreres and lay people;*
- *the effort to draw up, implement and evaluate the local and provincial educative and pastoral plan;*
- *heeding the pastoral directives of the Province, of the Congregation and of the Church.*

202. *Let the Province arrange **a programme of educative and pastoral activities** for initial formation. The programme should be in line with the Provincial Educative and Pastoral Plan and the Provincial Formation Plan. Its proposals should be graded and progressive, have precise formation objectives and cover the various sectors of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry.*

The Provincial Commission for formation should evaluate the programme from time to time, in dialogue with the Commission for youth pastoral ministry.

203. *The programme can include the ordinary educative and pastoral activities which are generally performed every week as well as extraordinary activities – extraordinary because of the time spent on them and because of the context and conditions in which they are carried out.*

Let the objectives, methods, strategies and the manner of guiding such activities be spelt out,¹⁹⁷ and let systematic evaluations be carried out by the persons concerned and by the community.

204. *Let steps be taken to **ensure that the educative and pastoral activities meet the following conditions:***

- *concern for the specific vocation and the level of formation of the confrere, and coherence with the particular phase he has reached in the formation process and with the demands it makes in the field of studies and community life;¹⁹⁸*

- *opportunities for a direct acquaintance with the situation of the provincial youth pastoral ministry in the various settings and according to the different dimensions of the SEPP; opportunities too for contact with those to whom our mission is directed;*

- *occasions for checking one’s motivations and qualities in carrying out the Salesian mission;*

- *opportunities for sharing the spirit and the educative and pastoral action with lay people and with members of the Salesian Family;*

- *the community aspect in planning the activities, keeping in mind the SEPP, in carrying them out and in evaluating them;*

- *guidance on the part of the community where the activity is carried out and guidance on the part of a qualified person who helps to organize the experience, to evaluate it and to live the apostolic values it contains;*

- *a formative assessment along the lines of the criteria given above.*

¹⁹⁷ Cfr. GC21 284, 289, 296.

¹⁹⁸ Cfr. RFIS 98b.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY OF FORMATION: AN OUTLINE

205. Developing our identity as Salesians (chap. 2) is in the first place a gift of the Spirit, but it is also an enterprise involving each confrere and each community in a process of discernment and constant growth to maturity. And the presentation of our Salesian vocation has focused attention on the contents to be assimilated, the qualities to be possessed and the attitudes to be lived.

Now, it is a question of how to effect the transition from proposal to reality, from values known to values lived. Responding to the invitation of Christ who calls personally means to make the values of our vocation become real and alive. (chap. 3).

206. *In the Salesian formation experience going all the way back to Don Bosco's times, and in the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation are to be found **the elements of a methodology of formation**.* Taking the form of convictions, criteria and conditions, they appear indispensable for attaining the objectives of the process of formation and continually fostering the growth of a vocation.

These are elements that have now to be applied and made practicable in different situations. In fact, the vocation and formation situation varies from Province to Province, and so do the possibilities and challenges. Therefore, in certain respects, the arrangements for initial formation and the animation of ongoing formation will have to be different.

These are elements that will make demands on every Salesian and place a responsibility on the Provinces, including those individuals who are more directly in charge of animating the work of formation.

Some of the methodological guidelines will be especially concerned with initial formation which has a specific arrangement laid down in the Constitutions by way of goals, periods, contents, activities and responsibilities.

207. Though we shall have to take into account the variety of situations, *there are some methodological areas of attention and guidelines that are strategically important:* a formation that involves the person in the depths of his being with the help of graded formative experiences that are part of a structured programme; concern for a formation environment and active involvement of all those who are jointly responsible; the formative value of some aspects of the formation experience; and the importance of guidance and discernment.

4.1 INVOLVE THE PERSON IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS BEING¹

208. Formation, as a personal attitude and a community responsibility, as an educative undertaking and a pedagogy of life, aims at a *personal assimilation of Salesian identity* in order to live it faithfully and creatively at every moment of life.

To become or to be a Salesian does not simply mean growing in one's Salesian identity on the operational level, that is, wanting to work for the young like Don Bosco; rather it is letting *the identity take deep roots in oneself*, that is, *following Christ* according to the grace proper to the charism of Don Bosco. From the configuration to Christ flows the mission, and in the mission is accomplished the configuration to Christ.

¹ Cfr. VC 65.

The process of growing in one's Salesian identity takes place in a person's heart, at the most intimate level of his affections, feelings, convictions and motivations, and is not limited to the acquisition or transmission of knowledge and patterns of behaviour. "Formation should therefore have a *profound effect on individuals*, 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."² It is not a matter of adaptation or alteration, but of interior development.

Our Constitutional text makes the formation method consist in *experiencing the values of our vocation*³ and our General Regulations assert that "the assimilation of the Salesian spirit is fundamentally a fact of living communication".⁴

209. To involve a person in the depths of his being implies in the first place *starting from the reality of the person* – a reality communicated, known and interpreted from the standpoint of the Salesian vocation. It is absolutely necessary to build on the foundation of an accurate and adequate knowledge of a person's past and present – steering clear of prejudices, groundless assumptions and false impressions – and to help each one face up to the whole truth about himself and identify what is in need of purification and growth.

Furthermore, to involve the person in the depths of his being from the viewpoint of his Salesian formation means *bringing him face to face with Salesian identity*, including its unifying elements and underlying motivations, an identity described in the Constitutions and incarnated in the living reality of the Congregation: it means building up a deep sense of belonging.

Only then will formation attain its basic purpose *when the Salesian allows God to address him in the depths of his heart*, makes his very own the criteria and values of the Salesian vocation, and is able to renounce opposing attitudes, formulate a personal plan, and unify his own life around true and genuine motives.

This formation from within is certainly a gift of the Spirit but it is also helped by a proper pedagogy. It is a responsibility and valid criterion for every Salesian who has the duty of taking care of his inner being, and also for the animators and guides who help him experience his vocation.

4.2 ANIMATE A COMPLETE FORMATION EXPERIENCE FOLLOWING A STRUCTURED PLAN

210. The Constitutions invite the Salesian to see a formative value in his ordinary activities and to "make the best formative use of any situation";⁵ at the same time, they point to a *process which goes from a first leaning towards Salesian life to a definitive commitment* to be lived with fidelity and perseverance.

Formation starts from the reality of the person of the Salesian, a reality in continual development, and has as its goal his identification as a Salesian so as to be able to live it out fully and joyfully. *The process through which this formation experience takes place is multi-faceted and diversified* in its subjects and leading figures, in its stages and activities, in its contents and expressions. Initial formation, in particular, is characterized by different phases and lived in different communities and with different persons holding responsibility; it envisages experiences, assessments and successive obligations.

² VC 65.

³ Cfr. C 98.

⁴ R 85.

⁵ C 119.

For formation to be efficacious it is necessary that the different aspects and stages, the situations, tasks, relationships and assessments which go to make up the formation experience, be seen and lived as elements of *a single process*, a single proposition, a coordinated and convergent action. And that the risk be avoided of turning formation into a collection of disjointed and discontinuous activities left to the individual undertaking of persons or groups.

211. There emerges in this way the importance of a *plan* – *an overall view and a convergence around some key-points* – totally centred on the complete formation of the Salesian. It is a harmonious whole comprising the responsibility of the person, the attitudes to be assimilated, the variety of settings, the diversity of activities, the interdependent action of those who hold responsibility, and the linking together in a progressive continuum of the different phases of initial formation and the various stages of the Salesian's life.

At every level, therefore, formation must be organized *according to a structured and complete plan*; it must be accompanied by a mentality capable of taking an overall view and carried out by the combined efforts of different people working together. At provincial level, in particular, it is necessary that there be a plan, an overall blueprint for action.

All the members of the provincial community, and especially the animators and those responsible for formation, take part in this process of reflection and sharing on formation, basing themselves on the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation, and paying attention to the challenges emerging from their own socio-cultural situation and from the condition of individual persons. The incarnation of the Salesian identity in a particular context requires a good knowledge of the values to be incarnated and a continual and updated reading of the situation, so as to be able to effect a prudent discernment.

212. However, the plan does not limit itself to pointing out the main goals of formation and the general course of action. *It also includes a specific scheme for each phase* in terms of objectives, strategies, a programme of animation and a process of evaluation.

The contents, experiences, attitudes, activities and key-events are all thought out, programmed and directed according to the purpose of each phase and of the whole of formation. The pedagogy used is one that overcomes the danger of fragmentation and improvisation, and does away with aimless or unfocused action.

Because of such an organized programme, the passage from one phase to another is determined more by the attainment of objectives than by the passing of time or the curriculum of studies, and one phase prepares for the next which in turn is built upon the previous one. *The pace of growth in vocation is maintained* without any slackening of effort; it is sustained by increasing responsibilities and timely assessments.

Concern for the person and his growth to maturity requires that the formation process *provides him with all the time that is necessary*. “Therefore, a right balance must be found between the formation of the group and that of each person, between the respect for the time envisioned for each phase of formation and its adaptation to the rhythm of each individual.”⁶

213. *It is the duty of the Salesian* to adopt a clear approach to his formation from the very beginning, to understand the purpose of the entire process and of its individual stages, to effect the passage from one phase to the next, responsibly making his own the aims of the new formation phase, to devise for himself practical objectives and lines of action, and to assess and communicate the implementation of his personal formation plan.

⁶ PI 29.

For their part, *those responsible for formation have a duty* to accept and implement the directives of the provincial plan and make sure that the candidate embraces the formation programme and adheres to it faithfully in his community.

It is from this point of view that the different aspects and the different periods, situations, tasks, relationships and assessments which make up the formation process through the years, are seen and lived as elements of a *single and complete personalized experience*, a scheme accepted and taken as one's own, a challenge shared by everyone involved, and a pedagogical programme animated by love for one's vocation and docility to the Spirit.

The plan is not so much a text to be put into practice as an *expression and instrument of a community that chooses to work together* to help each confrere tread the path of his formation.

4.3 ENSURE A FORMATION ENVIRONMENT AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF EVERYONE RESPONSIBLE

214. For a Salesian to experience his vocation and formation is to take part in an *experience of dialogue*, an experience associated with a companion and guide, one that engages him personally and involves his community as well.

Such an experience starts from a basic premise, that is, from a determination to embark jointly on a process of discernment, decision and fidelity to his vocation, maintaining an attitude of open communication, sincerity and shared responsibility, and listening to the voice of the Spirit and the "mediating" forces which the Spirit employs. It is therefore important that there be a permanent dialogue about his vocation between the confrere and his community at various levels, and that both sides assume their own responsibility and take the necessary steps.

4.3.1 The person of the Salesian

215. *Each confrere acknowledges his having been called personally* by God to Salesian consecrated life. It is a call to love God with all his heart and to love the young with pastoral charity, seeking their salvation.

Pastoral charity is therefore the motivation that lays the foundation for the work of formation and gives meaning to the renunciations, the efforts, the ascetical demands and the discipline that formation entails.⁷ And it is not only the point of departure; it is also the goal of formation. Charity is never fully developed: we are always in formation!

216. Driven by charity, *each one becomes "a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation"*: All formation... is ultimately a self-formation. No one can replace us in the responsible freedom that we have as individual persons."⁸

The Salesian accepts this responsibility. He assumes the Rule of life as his point of reference and takes part in the daily experience and growth process of his community. He keeps on learning more and more about himself, develops the different aspects of his personality, and strives to be a docile instrument in the Lord's hands for fulfilling the mission. He takes upon himself the asceticism involved and faces the struggles that fidelity to his vocation entails.

⁷ Cfr. C 98.

⁸ PDV 69.

One of the practical ways in which he shows responsibility for his formation is by having a *personal plan for his own life*. In it he delineates the kind of Salesian he feels called to become and the way to achieve this, always of course in tune with Salesian values. From time to time, in dialogue with his Rector, he assesses the progress he has made in attaining his objective.

217. The Salesian is not alone in confronting the responsibility he bears for his own formation. In the first place, he lives in an attitude of *dialogue with God*. He acknowledges that the initiative for his apostolic consecration lies in God's call. He lets himself be guided by the Spirit of Jesus, the first and principal agent of his formation⁹ who fashions in his heart the inner attitudes of the Son.¹⁰ "Docile to the Holy Spirit, he develops his talents and his gifts of grace in a constant effort of conversion and renewal."¹¹

218. *He looks up to Don Bosco the founder* as his father, teacher and guide of his formation experience, and above all as his model. He finds in him the original expression of the Salesian charism, and nurtures a "fondness" for him, a "fellow feeling", a close harmony of values and ideals.

With love and fidelity he follows the guidelines of the Church, "a begetter and educator of vocations",¹² and finds a sure way by being faithful to Peter's successor and his magisterium.

He accepts the directives and urgings of the Congregation, a community embodying the Salesian charism, as it continually seeks to be faithful to Christ, to the Church and to the genuine thinking of Don Bosco.

He maintains a constant dialogue with the local and provincial community, who are also "mediating" instruments of the formative work of the Lord and the ones responsible for the Salesian mission in an area. Taking an active part in the community endeavour, which is to become disciples together, he recognizes the role of those who have the task of accompanying him with their leadership and guidance.

At the same time, in the measure in which he is committed to his formation, he is also an agent of growth for his brothers and for his community.

4.3.2 The community, a formation setting

219. "The assimilation of the Salesian spirit," we read in the Regulations, "is fundamentally a fact of living communication"¹³ and this communication has as its natural context the local and the provincial community. As an educator, Don Bosco cared much about personal rapport, but he is seen above all as the creator of an environment that abounded in educational relationships and models, programmes and exhortations (events, activities, periods, celebrations, etc.), the author of a style and a pedagogy of life, the communicator of a plan to be lived together, and the animator of a community with a clear physiognomy and established reference points. The community of Valdocco, distinguished for its Preventive System, offered a setting that welcomed, directed, accompanied, encouraged and made demands.

The strength and the quality of the community as a setting for Salesian formation are a key methodological requirement for a personalized formation. Obviously it is not a matter of formation

⁹ Cfr. CRIS, Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life, 1983, 47.

¹⁰ Cfr. VC 66.

¹¹ C 99.

¹² PDV 35.

¹³ R 85.

understood as an adaptation or adjustment to a place, but of a setting which offers the conditions for a qualitative impact on a person's growth in his vocation and formation.

4.3.2.1 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

220. The local community is "*the natural environment for vocational growth... which the confrere joins with trust and in which he gives his responsible collaboration. The very life of the community, united in Christ and open to the needs of the times, is itself a factor in formation.*"¹⁴

As a setting and collective subject of formation, the community:

- promotes a network of genuine personal rapports and working relationships, and creates an atmosphere which accompanies each one's growth;
- offers an impetus to each one's vocation through a pedagogy of life which is made up of fraternal sharing, apostolic drive, shared responsibility, prayer in common, and a genuine style of evangelical life;
- manifests a special interest in the growth of each confrere in his vocation;
- fosters unity with the life of the Church and of the Congregation and openness to involvement with the Salesian Family and the laity;
- formulates its own formation plan based on the provincial plan.

221. The local community is the animating nucleus of a wider and more varied setting of Salesian life and formation at the local level, that is, the *educative and pastoral community* where the Salesian mission and spirit are shared among the confreres, the laity and young people.

The educative and pastoral community itself is formative insofar as:

- in the mutual sharing among the different members, the Salesian opens himself to all the richness of lived experiences, especially of the youth context and culture;
- in the very act of communicating his own experience as a consecrated person and of receiving the rich witness of life and faith of lay people, he becomes more aware of his own vocation and feels challenged to live it with greater fidelity, maturity and joy.

In addition to programmes of reciprocal formation for Salesians and laity together,¹⁵ the community comes to realize that the privileged space for genuine growth and intense ongoing formation lies *in the daily work of the educative and pastoral community*, with its network of relationships between persons and its operational synergy of formulating, implementing and verifying the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan. Naturally such a reciprocal formation requires that the Salesian possess an attitude of openness and respect and an ability to inspire confidence.

4.3.2.2 THE FORMATION COMMUNITY

222. Every Salesian community is a setting for formation, but there are communities that are specifically designed for initial formation: they are the so-called "formation communities".¹⁶

According to the guidelines of the Church, during the period of formation the candidates reside in "communities where *there should be no lack of the conditions required for a complete formation: spiritual, intellectual, cultural, liturgical, communitarian, and pastoral*".¹⁷

¹⁴ C 99.

¹⁵ Cfr. GC24 145.

¹⁶ Cfr. C 103.

¹⁷ PI 27.

The formation community, “more than a place, a material space, should be *a spiritual place, a way of life, an atmosphere* that fosters and ensures a process of formation”.¹⁸ It is a united family in which those in formation and their guides, joined together by their faith in Christ, by their love for Don Bosco, by charity, mutual esteem and joint endeavour¹⁹, seek to relive “the experience of the group of Twelve who were united to Jesus”.²⁰

Insofar as it is “an educational community in progress”,²¹ *its distinguishing feature is a plan that brings everything to focus* on just one purpose: the formation of the Salesian. In an atmosphere of shared responsibility, all strive together to adhere to certain values, objectives, experiences and formation methods, and from time to time they programme, evaluate and adjust their life, work and apostolic experiences to meet the requirements of the Salesian vocation.

An indispensable condition and key strategic point for building an atmosphere conducive to formation, for putting the community plan into practice, and for functioning with a suitable pedagogy is the presence of *good formation teams* made up of well-prepared educators whose contribution varies according to their talents, experience and competence. These educators, in fact, occupy a pivotal position: they determine the spirit and efficacy of the entire work of formation.²²

223. The formation community *guarantees the conditions necessary* for a personalization of the formation experience, for expressing it in a variety of ways, and for integrating and comparing different sensitivities and values – especially when the community is interprovincial or international. To encourage everyone to take part, it seeks to get them involved in drawing up the community plan and the programme of activities, in group work, in the revision of life and in other meaningful forms of encounter and participation. Every member opts for some service that will be useful for the life in community and the strengthening of communion.

In the formation community *each one helps the others* through friendship, witness, advice and service. By their example, those in positions of responsibility teach those in formation that a communion of spirit is reached only through a patient work of renunciation of oneself and openness to others.

The life in community is structured with a *reasonable amount of flexibility* in the time-table and the distribution of daily activities so as to educate to a personal appreciation of time and its proper use and to foster a spirit of initiative.

Taking the vocation and formation aspect as its decisive criterion, the formation community maintains *meaningful relations with the families* of those in formation, cultivates an *open attitude towards the members of the Salesian Family*, and plays its part in the *context of the Church and society*.

224. To be able to accomplish its mission properly, the formation community needs a *certain consistency in terms of numbers and quality*. Communities that are too small or too big create problems for a formation pedagogy. A sufficient number of members can enhance community living and sharing; it can multiply relationships and make for creative ways of doing things in the different areas of community life. An excessive number of members, on the other hand, can - if the required conditions for formation are lacking - make it difficult to get individuals to take part and to

¹⁸ PDV 42.

¹⁹ Cfr. C 103

²⁰ PDV 60.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cfr. CEC, *Direttive sulla preparazione degli educatori nei seminari*, 1993, 1.

be responsible, to engage in formative interactions on a personal basis, to know and guide the formation process, and can instead encourage an external, superficial conformity, a kind of mass phenomenon. To have a good community, qualitatively speaking, there is need of persons who can be near at hand, animate, accompany and guide the work of formation, and not lose sight of the wider horizons.

The obligation to ensure a proper formative setting, not only in terms of the number of the members but also in terms of the quality of the formation team, suggests and in some cases requires that *some provinces join forces* to establish interprovincial communities.

In communities that depend on more than one province, the sharing of responsibility for formation on a durable basis requires the establishment of a “*curatorium*” or other mechanisms, and the presence of formation guides from the different provinces. Care must also be taken to foster a sense of belonging to one’s own Province; helpful for this are frequent visits by the Provincial or other confreres, the exchange of news and every other means of communication, and other possible ways of keeping in touch.

4.3.2.3 THE STUDY CENTRE

225. The study centre forms an integrating part of the formation setting. In it everyone is involved in *a single undertaking which has formation for its goal*, even if the contribution of the centre is mostly intellectual.

Relationships between the various components of the centre are inspired by dialogue, understanding, friendship and the sharing of responsibility.

It is important to abide by the criteria laid down by the *Ratio*²³ when choosing a study centre and to ensure the conditions which determine the quality and characteristics of the formation it imparts.

4.3.2.4 THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY²⁴

226. Charged with “promoting... the life and mission of the Congregation” in a specific circumscription,²⁵ the Province is *a formation community but also a community in formation*.

It is made up of confreres who are in different stages and situations with regard to their formation; it comprises communities that do not have the same history nor live the same experience, and are facing changing circumstances and the challenges of the times.

For this reason, *the Province engages in a continual process of reflection* on the situation of the confreres and the communities and their formation, and becomes a setting that animates, fosters and demands fidelity to the Salesian vocation.

This duty of formation is not a pure state of mind nor only a matter of good will; it is a principle that organizes the life of the Province and embraces its whole reality. Starting from the requirements that flow from an awareness of the Salesian vocation and from shared responsibility for the mission on the part of everyone, it takes the form of a *structured Provincial Formation Plan*.

²³ Cfr. previous n. 145-146, 167-180.

²⁴ Cfr. ISM, chap. 10: “*Animazione e governo dell’Ispettorato, comunità in formazione e formatrice*”.

²⁵ Cfr. C 157.

227. The first responsibility of the provincial community in the area of formation is *to foster* – through a living communication - *the growth of the confreres*, especially of all in initial formation, *in their Salesian identity*. It does make a difference therefore whether the provincial community is strongly motivated or not, whether it is fervent in whatever it does or is simply tired.

The climate of prayer and witness, the sense of common responsibility and openness to situations and to the signs of the times, the fulfilment of the tasks of the Salesian mission with spiritual enthusiasm and competence, the provision of an environment that daily offers criteria and incentives for fidelity, the network of cordial relations and collaboration among the communities, among the individual confreres, among the groups of the Salesian Family and with the lay people involved in the community - all these aspects make up the provincial setting for the formation of the confreres.

Such an atmosphere enables the confreres in formation to have a living experience of their Salesian identity and find support along the path of their vocation. It is valuable also for the other confreres who find encouragement for their growth in fidelity.

228. *The Provincial Chapter*, in particular, inasmuch as it is “the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems”²⁶ has a special responsibility for the growth of the Province in the Salesian vocation. Held every three years, with a preparation that precedes it and a circulation of ideas and plans that follows it, the Provincial Chapter *keeps the Province, practically speaking, in a state of continual reflection, search and tension* in view of actualizing the Salesian identity.

A practical expression of the responsibility of the Provincial Chapter in the field of formation is the formulation and revision of the Provincial Directory.²⁷

4.3.2.5 THE WORLD COMMUNITY

229. *The world community* makes the Salesian a participant in the communion of spirit, witness and service that is its life within the universal Church.²⁸ The vitality of the Congregation, the actual relevance of its work, and the requirements and challenges thrown up by the historical circumstances have a strong impact on the confreres and are a providential incentive for their formation.

The sense of communion in the same vocation finds its highest expression in the *General Chapter*. It manifests the commitment of the whole Congregation to keep itself faithful to the Gospel and to the Founder’s charism, and sensitive to the needs of time and place. It seeks to respond to the needs and challenges arising from the youth situation, from the Church and from society,. With the guidelines it offers and the path it indicates, it keeps the Congregation striving towards a better formation and in a permanent attitude of renewal.

4.3.3 Those who are jointly responsible for formation

²⁶ C 170.

²⁷ Cfr. C 171.

²⁸ Cfr. C 59.

230. Among the many elements that a Province must ensure in the work of formation (programmes, contents, institutions, methodologies), the most decisive and necessary is the concern for those responsible for formation.

When we speak of those jointly responsible for formation, we do not refer in the first place to individual persons or to formation guides considered in isolation, but to the formation guides who work in the context of a formation community and as members of a formation team, be it at provincial or at local level.

The qualitative strength of a formation community is based above all on the effective strength of the team and on the real possibility of securing the participation of those who are jointly responsible for the formation process at the level of the Province. This is one of the criteria for the setting up of a formation community. To avoid having formation communities of poor quality it will be necessary in some situations to make strong and courageous decisions for collaboration between Provinces.

4.3.3.1 *THOSE JOINTLY RESPONSIBLE AT LOCAL LEVEL*

4.3.3.1.1 The Rector²⁹

231. The Rector is the centre of the Salesian community, and has as his essential role that of being “the animator of the community”, the one who forms the confreres, and “who presides over the community in love”.³⁰ His service of authority is *directed to the growth of his confreres in their vocation*.

Convinced of the formative value of the environment, he endeavours to *create an atmosphere* abounding in Salesian values. He keeps the community united in a spirit of family and an attitude of sharing, and radiates in it a sense of liveliness and pastoral zeal.

He maintains the community in *an attitude of response to God’s call* and in tune with the Church and the Congregation.

He accompanies the growth of the community by exercising the *service of authority* in a fatherly manner and by making good use of means such as programming and evaluation, meetings, conferences, prayer and the opportunities that arise each day.

He gets the *other members involved in the animation of the community*, and in a particular way brings the local Council to assume its responsibility.

232. He encourages and directs each confrere in living the experience of his vocation.

A privileged occasion for dialogue is the *friendly talk with the confreres*.³¹ In it, in a special way, he becomes truly “a father, teacher and spiritual guide”.³² He is aware that the efficacy of the frequent talk on a regular basis depends above all on his human and spiritual personality, on his availability and kindness, and on his competence.³³

The Rector can be asked by the confreres also for the service of *spiritual direction*. This is a delicate task and a precious offer of help in realizing one’s own personal vocation. The Rector makes himself cordially available for this service.

²⁹ Cfr. The Salesian Rector. A Ministry for the Animation and Governing of the Local Community, Rome 1986.

³⁰ GC21 53.

³¹ Cfr. C 70.

³² C 55.

³³ Cfr. Il Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 578-581.

As Rector of the Salesian community, which itself is the animator of the educative and pastoral community, he has *precise responsibilities in creating within the EPC a warm and apostolic climate* that fosters the growth of Salesians, the young and lay collaborators.³⁴

233. In addition to the roles assigned to every Rector of a local community, *the Rector of a formation community has a further demanding role* in the field of formation. Forming a united team with those responsible for formation, he animates the community and brings the efforts of all to converge on a common plan which is in line with the provincial plan.

He is *responsible for the personal formation process of each confrere*. He is also the *spiritual director proposed* to, but not imposed on, the confreres in formation. It is his specific duty to guide each confrere, helping him to understand and make his own the phase of formation he is engaged in.³⁵ He maintains a frequent and cordial dialogue with the confrere, endeavours to know his strengths and weaknesses, makes him recommendations that are clear and demanding, proposes suitable goals, supports and guides him in times of difficulty, and together with him evaluates the progress he is making in his formation.

To this task which the Province entrusts to the Rector there ought to correspond in the confrere an awareness and a willingness to establish a personal relationship of openness, trust and sharing in the matter of his formation.

Together with the Council of the community the Rector carries out the required vocation discernment, especially when it is time for admissions and assessments.

4.3.3.1.2 The formation team³⁶

234. The ones who make up the formation team and are *jointly responsible for the community and its formation project* are all those who collaborate with different and interdependent roles, functions and contributions, ensuring a unified and complete organization at the service of formation. They see to the animation of prayer, the area of studies or apostolate, financial administration and spiritual guidance.

Among them a prominent position belongs to the confessor because of his important service in guiding the confreres in their vocation.

Brother confreres too make a significant contribution to the formation community, particularly through the services of community animation and teaching.

235. Called to accompany their brothers as they grow in their vocation, those responsible for formation *carry out their work according to the mind and practice of the Congregation and the Province*, as described in the present *Ratio* and the Provincial Plan. They make their own the overall view of formation as a gradual, continuous, structured and unified process to be implemented in a Salesian manner.

Theirs is a real *team-work* requiring: communication, cohesion, unity and loyalty in discharging their different roles and responsibilities. They constitute with the Rector a group

³⁴ Cfr. C 55.

³⁵ Cfr. DSM

³⁶ Cfr. CEC, *Direttive sulla preparazione degli educatori nei seminari*, 1993.

animated by him and convinced of its common responsibility.³⁷ They take it upon themselves to adopt uniform criteria for the task of formation and evaluation, and draw up together the programme of activities for the community. They make it a point to keep regularly in touch with all those who for different reasons and at different times are involved in the formation process.

236. In fulfilling their mission the formation guides are conscious of the fact that they are mediators of God's action and manifestations of the Province's responsibility. They strive to perform their particular service with the ardour of the *da mihi animas* and in fidelity to the Preventive System.

Backed by a solid Salesian spirituality and a sufficient experience in educative and pastoral work, *they communicate in a vibrant way a love and enthusiasm for Don Bosco* and for the Salesian vocation. They ensure that the community remains faithful to the practice of the Constitutions and takes advantage of the interdependence of the forms of the one vocation.

Being men of prayer and spiritual wisdom, they are able to help their brothers discern God's action and the signs of his will, and *guide them in the ways of the Lord*, both with their words and with the coherent witness of their consecrated life.

They take a positive and critical outlook towards culture and social problems with a view to contextualizing the formation process in a suitable way.³⁸

237. They know how to apply a *pedagogy that is "dynamic, active, open* to the realities of life and attentive to a person's developmental process"³⁹ and to the pace of the group as well.

They pay special attention to the confrere in formation, furnishing him with the spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral elements he needs to assimilate the formation programme. They accompany, advise, support, correct and encourage him according as his personal situation demands.

They follow each one's progress, assessing his vocation suitability in the name of the Church and the Congregation, and offering their contributions of information and discernment that can also serve for the various admissions.

To perform this service those in charge of formation are asked for a "careful observation refined by a good knowledge of the human sciences so as to go beyond appearances and the superficial level of motivations and behaviour and help [the candidate] to know himself well, accept himself serenely, correct himself and grow to maturity starting from his real, not imaginary, roots, and from the very core of his personality".⁴⁰

238. Those responsible for formation are *the ones to animate and guide* the formation process, setting goals, doing the necessary assessments, and taking the proper decisions.

They possess "skills and a determination to exert an influence, to engage in dialogue with the candidates, to interact in a genuinely evangelical way with the challenges they bring up, without being defensive or resigned. In a word, they are not to be guides who helplessly watch from the

³⁷ Cfr. C 104.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ DES 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 57.

sidelines as [the candidates] form their convictions and attitudes. They are not to be silent and detached ‘examples’, but educators who make suggestions and persuade”.⁴¹

239. To carry out this service *personal gifts are required together with a solid* basic doctrinal, spiritual, pastoral and pedagogical *preparation* and also ordinarily specific training.

As for their *ongoing formation*, those responsible for formation in the Province find a true and proper school in the formation that takes place in their daily life and activities, in their aptitude for a work that is shared, planned and evaluated, in their readiness for periodic meetings for reflection on the state of the formation process, for sharing and updating, and in the occasional opportunities for renewal. For this purpose there has to be a certain *stability* in the work of formation, and the animating role of the Delegate and the Provincial Commission for formation is indispensable.

4.3.3.1.3 The teachers and experts

240. The teachers – and in the first place, the Salesian teachers – are *true formation guides*, even when they are occupied only in the academic field. They work in close collaboration with the others responsible for formation and within the overall framework of the formation plan and process. Their role is not confined to the purely intellectual aspect and their teaching goes hand in hand with the witness of their faith-convictions. They impart formation through their friendly and educative presence amongst the Salesian candidates, taking part with them, whenever possible, in their times of prayer, recreation and apostolic activities.

Conscious of the fact that they are performing an ecclesial and Salesian service by virtue of obedience, *they transmit the doctrine and experience of the Church and the Congregation*. With generosity and scientific rigour, they offer their own qualified contribution in the different disciplines to help their students deeply assimilate the mystery of Christ. They guide personal study in a way that enables their students to learn a method of scientific work, and to assimilate and reflect on the knowledge they have acquired and put it into practice.

241. To carry out this function, the teachers receive a *good basic preparation* in the humanities, in philosophy and in theology, and training in their own sector of teaching.

They are endowed with pedagogical skills, and for this purpose are given a suitable preparation⁴² so as to be in a position to help their students cultivate a discerning outlook and a mentality of ongoing formation. Furthermore, they are trained in active teaching methods that call for student participation, and keep themselves up-to-date in the scientific and methodological field.

242. They take steps to grow in their *experience of Salesian life*, following with interest and taking part in the life of the Congregation and of the Province, and keeping in close touch with the world of the young and the working-classes. In this way they are able to establish an effective link between the topics they teach and the contents and needs of Salesian apostolic action.

Their *exercise of the educative and pastoral ministry* can offer them occasions and incentives for a sharing of ideas and experiences, but they apply themselves to it without putting aside the requirements of their academic role.⁴³

⁴¹ VECCHI J., “I protagonisti della formazione sacerdotale”, in: DAL COVOLO-TRIACCA, *Sacerdoti per la nuova evangelizzazione. Studi sull’Esortazione apostolica ‘Pastores Dabo Vobis’ di Giovanni Paolo II*, Rome 1993, p. 321.

⁴² Cfr. RFIS 35.

⁴³ Cfr. RFIS 37.

243. Furthermore, there is a special contribution that Salesians and others who possess a specific competence (experts) are called to give in a systematic or occasional manner and in different fields. This contribution to the growth and experience of formation in the candidates or confreres can be preventive, pedagogical or supplemental. When the experts are not Salesian, it is important to ensure that their service respects the characteristics proper to our vocation and is considered within the overall framework of Salesian formation. And when the expert's intervention is required for reasons of therapy, it is important that it be proposed and suitably motivated, never imposed.

4.3.3.1.4 The contribution of lay people

244. The theology of the Church as a communion has brought an appreciation of the *laity*, and drawn attention to their contribution not only in the area of the Salesian mission but also in the specific area of formation.⁴⁴

From the standpoint of their specific vocation, lay people can help the Salesian to appreciate his identity still more deeply and to develop a stronger sense of Church in an interdependence and reciprocity of different vocations.

In this connection there is today a greater openness and receptivity to *women* for their ability to make relationships and settings more human and more personal. And there is an appreciation for the contribution they make in the field of education and Salesian formation in ways that are consistent with the values of consecration and the different cultural situations.⁴⁵

Acknowledging “the suitability of a healthy influence of lay spirituality and of the charism of femininity in every educational itinerary”,⁴⁶ the GC24 proposed formation programmes for Salesians and lay people, men and women, together⁴⁷ in which each one brings his or her specific contribution.

245. For what regards the *involvement of lay people, men and women, in the initial formation of Salesians*, it is desirable that they be able to perform roles that have a direct formative influence. The GC24 declared that the confreres in formation “receive more efficacious help when, from the period of their initial formation, they are introduced to experiences of collaboration with lay people both at a directly practical level and in the process of the elaboration of the Salesian educative and pastoral plan”.⁴⁸ For this reason it asked that “keeping in mind the different nature of the SDBs and the laity, and the times needed for human, affective and apostolic maturing, the stages of initial formation should have contents and experiences of reciprocal and complementary formation for the common growth”.⁴⁹

In addition, there are *sectors in which the laity can give a specific contribution* in virtue of their particular skills and experience, such as: family spirituality, some pastoral fields, the political, economic and social arena, and social communication.⁵⁰ In these cases, “they are to be selected with care, within the framework of Church laws and according to their particular charisms and proven

⁴⁴ Cfr. PDV 66; DES 20.

⁴⁵ Cfr. VECCHI J., “A love without limits for God and the young”, in: AGC 366 (1999), for example p. 26-28. Cfr. also PDV 66; GC24, Analytical index: Woman/Women.

⁴⁶ PDV 66.

⁴⁷ Cfr. GC24 138-141.

⁴⁸ GC24 53.

⁴⁹ GC24 142.

⁵⁰ Cfr. DES 10-11.

competence”⁵¹ and their cooperation must be suitably coordinated and integrated in the primary educational responsibilities of those entrusted with the work of formation.

4.3.3.2 *THOSE JOINTLY RESPONSIBLE AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL*

4.3.3.2.1 The Provincial with his Council⁵²

246. In the provincial community it is the Provincial assisted by his Council who has the prime responsibility for both initial and ongoing formation.

He carries out *his service* in different ways:

- he accepts personal *responsibility for the work of formation*. He sees to it that the formation objectives are attained and safeguards Salesian identity in the cultural situation. He encourages everyone to work together in the area of formation, and guides the Province in formulating its Formation Plan;

- acting as the *spiritual animator of the Province*, he prompts the confreres to know and be docile to the Church’s magisterium and offers them the spiritual heritage of Don Bosco’s charism as borne out in the Congregation’s guidelines;

- he *fosters a sharing of responsibility with the Provincial Council* and the Provincial Commission for formation coordinated by the Provincial Delegate;

- he *follows and supports the local communities* as places and subjects of formation: he makes sure that they are animated in a way that turns them into settings, rich in Salesian values, that attract vocations; he devotes his personal attention to preparing the Rectors and accompanying them with the help of periodic and systematic initiatives (meetings, courses, etc.);

- he *ensures that the formation structures have all the conditions* needed to carry out a genuine work of formation in its different aspects and to achieve the objectives of each phase and of the entire formation process;

- he *provides the formation communities* with a Rector and a team that is suitably prepared to carry out a good work of formation; with timely and wise decisions he arranges for the training and retraining of those entrusted with formation; he pays frequent visits to the formation communities and the confreres in initial formation; he keeps himself informed of their aptitudes and inclinations, and encourages them to strive for excellence in view of the requirements of the common good;

- he *encourages all the confreres to grow in their Salesian vocation* and urges them in different ways to live it in their apostolic work in the spirit of the “*da mihi animas*”, to develop it with the help of true relationships, to make it known through a particular manner of evangelical life, to have it rooted in a vibrant and permanent dialogue with the Lord, and to renew it in fidelity to Don Bosco;⁵³

- he makes sure that the one who is tending towards Salesian life has a suitable environment and the necessary conditions for the first *discernment of his vocation*; he accompanies the candidate through the delicate period of initial formation and fulfils his responsibility at the time of discernment and admission;

⁵¹ PDV 66.

⁵² Cfr. *L’Ispettore salesiano. Un ministero per l’animazione e il governo della comunità ispettoriale*, Rome 1987, especially chap. 10: “*Animazione e governo dell’Ispettorato, comunità in formazione e formatrice*”.

⁵³ Cfr. ISM 305-307.

- takes the *training of his confreres* as his priority task; identifies the areas in which, for the present moment and for the future, intellectual preparation and professional competence seem to be more urgent for better accomplishing the mission; draws up and implements the Provincial Plan for the preparation of trained personnel and verifies it periodically; engages those who are trained in specific tasks at the service of the Province and the Congregation and does whatever is possible to keep them in their field of qualification;
- endorses ordinary and extraordinary initiatives that make for *ongoing formation*;
- offers *open and generous collaboration in formation initiatives at interprovincial level*, at the level of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family, and makes good use of the programmes offered by the Church and Institutes of consecrated life.

4.3.3.2.2 The Delegate and the Provincial Commission for formation

247. To the Provincial Delegate for formation and to the Provincial Formation Commission (PFC) coordinated by him are assigned the tasks of reflecting, planning, programming, coordinating, implementing and verifying as laid down in the Directory.

The *Delegate for formation* is the delegate of the Provincial and works in dependence on and in agreement with him and his Council. His role can vary, depending on the assignments given him, on the time at his disposal, and on the other roles entrusted to him.

It is desirable that he be a member of the Provincial Council in order to be able to put forward regularly formation views and concerns.

In his work of animation, which he carries out in collaboration with the members of the Commission, he shows concern for the confreres and the communities, and in a special way for the formation communities; he sees to the communication and collaboration in the area of formation with other groups of the Salesian Family and among the Provinces.

The situation of the Province and the options it has made can lead to different configurations of the *Commission*. To animate the various sectors it may become necessary to set up different groups: for initial formation, for ongoing formation, for the formation of Salesians and laity, for linkage with the Salesian Family. However, it is important to ensure that the arrangement makes for convergence and does not endorse parallel or sectional operations.

The composition of the Commission is determined by its nature and responsibilities, and requires that the members not only make a valid and complementary contribution according to their experience, competence or role, but also can find the time needed for meetings, reflection, the exchange of ideas, the study of directives pertaining to formation, and collaboration in concrete services.

Among the *responsibilities of the Delegate – in collaboration with the PFC –* are the following:

- to *reflect* – together with the Provincial and his Council – *on the situation of formation in the Province*;
- to assist the Provincial in drawing up, implementing and revising the *Provincial Formation Plan*;⁵⁴
- to collaborate in drawing up and verifying the *Provincial plan for the preparation and specialization* of confreres;⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Cfr. n. 24 above.

- to evaluate, in ordinary circumstances, *the implementation of the formation section of the Provincial Directory*;⁵⁶
- to see that the *Ratio* and the booklet, “*Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment*”, are made known and become a constant reference point;⁵⁷
- to ensure a *structured, planned and coordinated action* in the field of formation⁵⁸ so that the different areas of formation, the activities, the initiatives, and the work of those responsible – all tend to develop the Salesian identity and contribute to make the Province a formation community;
- to take care of the unity and continuity of the *process of initial formation*, giving special attention to the criteria of discernment and formation pedagogy;⁵⁹
- to join with the *formation communities* and, where necessary, also with the study centres, in organizing and evaluating their work of formation;
- to verify the *programme of educative and pastoral activities* from time to time, in dialogue with the Provincial Commission for Youth Pastoral Ministry;⁶⁰
- to provide initiatives of animation and guidance for the *practical trainees* and of support for their communities;⁶¹
- to collaborate with the Provincial and his Council in carrying out a *comprehensive Plan of ongoing formation*, in animating the process of ongoing formation of the communities and the confreres, and in planning the formation of Salesians and laity together;⁶²
- to arrange an *annual programme of ongoing formation* in line with the Provincial Formation Plan, a programme that responds to the different situations of the confreres (age, specific vocation, roles),⁶³ offering specific services, an outline of themes, and materials;
- to devise ways and means of helping the confreres *to know the guidelines* of the Congregation, to grow in a deeper understanding of the Salesian spirit and to engage in a serious and updated study of the history, spirituality and pedagogical heritage proper to our charism;⁶⁴
- to organize *systematic meetings for an exchange of views with the Delegates and the Provincial teams* of Youth Pastoral Ministry, the Salesian Family and the other sectors, in order to make formation more related to the situation of the Province and to effect a better coordination of the work of animation;
- to maintain and make use of the contacts and initiatives *at interprovincial or regional level* and with the Salesian Family in the field of formation;
- to keep in touch with the Councillor for formation.

4.3.3.3 CONTACTS AND COLLABORATION AT INTERPROVINCIAL LEVEL

248. The formation work of the Provinces receives support and encouragement from the different forms of interprovincial communication, linkage and collaboration in the field of initial and ongoing formation.

⁵⁵ Cfr. n. 158 above.

⁵⁶ Cfr. n. 23 above.

⁵⁷ Cfr. n. 21 above.

⁵⁸ Cfr. n. 22 above.

⁵⁹ Cfr. n. 29 above; n. 278 below.

⁶⁰ Cfr. n. 202 above.

⁶¹ Cfr. n. 437 below.

⁶² Cfr. n. 556 below.

⁶³ Cfr. *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Cfr. n. 50 above.

Mention has already been made of interprovincial communities for initial formation and study centres; the importance of joining forces for the sake of better formation has been stressed and concrete suggestions made.

Other initiatives have to do with the Provincial Delegates, those responsible for formation, and the confreres in formation, or they concern the whole area of ongoing formation.

There are different forms and structures of linkage, different types and levels of service, and different too are those to whom the service is directed; much also depends on the relationship between the Provinces. The range of options is wide: it extends from occasional coordination to "delegations" (or delegates), to permanent interprovincial or Conference-level teams, to national or regional centres; from sporadic meetings to periodic initiatives, to a comprehensive programme of activities; from a sharing of experiences to joint study and reflection to organizing meetings, seminars, and formation experiences to preparing common terms of reference and helpful materials; from a first concentration on the provincial delegates and those responsible for formation to the offer of services to various groups of confreres (Rectors, priests and brothers in their first five years after priestly ordination or perpetual profession, confreres for perpetual profession, ongoing formation experiences, etc.).

In this variety of situations and contexts, the linkage between the Formation Delegates, the Provincial Commissions and those responsible for formation helps the Provinces:

- to reflect together on Salesian formation and on the challenges it presents at the interprovincial level;
- to promote the exchange of experiences and of all that can enhance the Salesian formation process in the individual Provinces;
- to formulate criteria, terms of reference and materials for the work of formation;
- to respond to the needs of formation with an open mind, a pooling of ideas and the ability to collaborate;
- to bolster the formation work of the individual Provinces with the help of common initiatives;
- to foster and draw on the services of Salesians in study centres and centres for ongoing formation.

The effect of the forms of coordination and collaboration, which are carried out in dependence and in close relationship with the Provincials and those responsible at the level of the Conference or Region, depends to a great extent on the dedication of the coordinators, a systematic programme of activities that answers real needs, the commitment of the Provincial Delegates, and the sharing of responsibility among the Provincials.

4.3.3.4 *THOSE JOINTLY RESPONSIBLE AT WORLD LEVEL*

249. *Government at world level* ensures unity of life and action in different settings and situations, and promotes the constant fidelity of the members to the Salesian charism.

The Rector Major, as the father and centre of unity, promotes with the assistance of his Council, the constant and renewed fidelity to the Salesian vocation, and animates the confreres through his ordinary government, authoritative doctrinal teaching, contacts, visits and meetings.

250. In carrying out their service, *all the members of the General Council*, be they Councillors entrusted with specific sectors or Regional Councillors entrusted with groups of Provinces, give special consideration to formation.

The General Councillor for formation has the task of “furthering the integral and ongoing formation of the members. He follows with particular care the phases of the period of initial formation to ensure that in them the content, arrangement of studies, formation methods and structures provide the conditions necessary for growth in the Salesian vocation.”⁶⁵

In agreement with the Regional Councillors, he requires all the Provinces to draw up and implement a programme of initiatives for ongoing formation, and he takes particular care of the centres that promote it.

4.4 MAKE DAILY LIFE AND WORK MORE EFFICACIOUS FOR FORMATION

251. Making daily life and work more efficacious for formation is a strategic course of action of Salesian methodology. Don Bosco attributed an educative value to everyday duties in the playground and in the school, in the community and in the Church,⁶⁶ and also to the way of looking at and interpreting events and responding to the situations of young people, the Church and society.

To make daily life a formative experience for the person, and not something that leaves him indifferent or deforms him, entails certain requirements (attitudes, mentality, organizational set-up, assessments). It also means helping each one take on, live and evaluate his life, seeing it as a journey in which he manifests, involves and fosters his self-experience, his criteria for doing things, his way of relating to others and to the situation, and his lively embrace of Salesian values.

When lived with a concern for formation, daily life draws us closer to the truth about ourselves and gives us opportunities and encouragement to realize our plan of life.

The Salesian, who “*sees his ordinary activities as effective means of formation*”,⁶⁷ is called to live his meeting with the young, his working with others, his communication and interpersonal relationships, his openness to and encounter with his pastoral, cultural and social situation as so many opportunities for his own formation.

4.4.1 The presence among the young

252. Meeting the young is for the Salesian a school of formation.

By becoming their travelling companion, the Salesian has a *direct exposure to the world of the young*; he listens to their questions and experiences, and enters their culture and language. He learns to accept and love them just as they are and to live the Preventive System with them.

His contact with the constantly evolving world of the young *makes him aware of the need for educational and professional competence*, pastoral skills and constant updating.

Knowing the decisive role of communication in the lives of young people, *he makes every effort to become a good communicator* who is able to convey to them messages with a meaning.

And since “witness is the only language able to convince young people that ‘God exists and his love can fill a life completely’”,⁶⁸ *he feels challenged to live and make transparent his faith in Jesus Christ.*

⁶⁵ C 135.

⁶⁶ Cfr. C 40.

⁶⁷ C 119.

⁶⁸ GC23 219.

4.4.2 Working with others

253. To carry out the mission to the young requires *effective communion and an ability to bring people together*.

“Working with others”, the Salesian learns to operate with a sense of shared responsibility, respecting and harmonizing the different roles; for this he employs a pedagogy of life which enables him to overcome individualism, activism and the mania for immediate action and results.

Working with others turns out to be truly formative when it goes hand in hand with reflection, and still more, when reflection is permeated by an attitude of prayer.

This is why the community creates times and spaces that make it possible to take a long, hard look, to read between the lines, and to share with others in all serenity; and the Salesian is called to confront his own basic motivations, his own pastoral sensitivity, and the awareness of his own identity.

Reflection leads one to learn from life⁶⁹ (events, situations, experiences) and develops a mentality and a capacity for discovery, both personal and communitarian; and this is the basis of ongoing formation.

4.4.3 Communication

254. Reciprocal communication is formative when it is a *true exchange of gifts and experiences* for the sake of the mutual enrichment of individuals and the community. It requires intelligence, an open spirit and a practical preparation for dialogue, and in turn provides enlightenment, stimulus and encouragement for one’s personal growth.

Still more, *communication is something that is learned*; one needs training to communicate. On the part of the one who communicates, there is need to overcome a certain reserve or timidity in expressing one’s thoughts and feelings and to have the courage to place one’s confidence in the other person. On the part of the one who receives the communication, there is need for an ability to receive it without any lessening of esteem for the person, without judging him, and to appreciate the difference of viewpoints.⁷⁰ And on the part of both, there must be a readiness to modify one’s judgements and positions and to seek common ground.

4.4.4 Interpersonal relationships

255. Interpersonal relationships *cultivate and reveal the level of a person’s maturity*, manifesting how far love has taken possession of his life and to what extent he has learned to express it. On the contrary, “difficult relationships, situations of conflict which have not been suitably healed through reconciliation, act within a person, blocking the maturing process and creating difficulties in the way of the calm and joyful self-donation to the mission and to God”.⁷¹

⁶⁹ C 119.

⁷⁰ Cfr. VECCHI J., “Experts, witnesses and craftsmen of communion”, AGC 363 (1998), p. 34-36; GC24, Analytical index: Communication.

⁷¹ VECCHI J., *ibid.*, p. 32.

Interpersonal relationships are *built on the basis of qualities “which are required in all human relationships: respect, kindness, sincerity, self-control, tactfulness, a sense of humour and a spirit of sharing”*.⁷² They are “inspired by self-sacrifice and self-giving and not selfishly centred on oneself and one’s own concerns”;⁷³ where pardon and love are practised, it is possible to build good interpersonal relationships.

4.4.5 The socio-cultural context

256. The relationship with one’s socio-cultural context is also *a factor that impinges on one’s manner of being, feeling and judging*; it affects one’s identity.

The first step consists in *knowing the situation* and sketching a picture of the socio-cultural context in which one is immersed and the stimuli and conditionings arising therefrom.

But, even more important than knowledge is the *interpretation of the situation*, a difficult task because of the ambivalence of the various elements involved. “It is not sufficient simply to welcome the positive factors and to counteract the negative ones. The positive factors themselves need to be subjected to a careful work of discernment, so that they do not become isolated and contradict one another, becoming absolutes and at odds with one another. The same is true for the negative factors, which are not to be rejected en bloc and without distinction, because in each one there may lie hidden some value which awaits liberation and restoration to its full truth.”⁷⁴

257. Such an interpretation, made in the light of the Gospel, draws out from the situation not just simple “facts” which leave a person uninvolved, but a “call” from God which challenges him through the “task” to be performed. It is a *true spiritual discernment*: one “[learns] how to discover the signs of God in earthly realities”.⁷⁵

With courage and wisdom, *suitable responses and new approaches are sought*, new forms of life and pedagogy are created, and all the while the cultural values which can be harmoniously fused with the Gospel and with the demands of consecration and the Salesian mission and spirit, are sifted, transformed and assumed.

The ability to “see” God in the world and discern his call in the needs of times and places is a fundamental law of the process of Salesian growth. As art. 119 of the Constitutions says, “living in the midst of the young and in constant contact with working-class surroundings, the Salesian tries to discern the voice of the Spirit in the events of each day, and so acquires the ability to learn from life’s experiences.” That is to say: he becomes an intelligent pupil in the school of life, and attains wisdom through the path of experience.

4.5 STRIVE FOR EFFECTIVE GUIDANCE

258. The formation experience is a *personally guided experience*. Guidance in fact is an indispensable condition for personalizing the formation experience and vocation discernment.

Community and personal guidance is a fundamental characteristic of Salesian pedagogy. Don Bosco was a master of the art of guiding his boys, making use of the direction of the

⁷² Fraternal life in community, 27.

⁷³ VECCHI J., *ibid.*

⁷⁴ PDV 10.

⁷⁵ VC 68.

community or the setting, occasional direction, and the regular direction of conscience in confession.

To strive for effective guidance means to guarantee the confrere the proper presence, dialogue, counselling and support in every moment of the formation process, and to see that on his part he is well-disposed and actively responsible in seeking, accepting and benefiting from this service, knowing full well that it can assume many forms and levels of intensity. Guidance is not limited to individual dialogue, but is a composite of relations, environment and pedagogy, something typical of the Preventive System: it goes from a fraternal presence at hand that evokes confidence and familiarity, to a group venture, to a community experience; from brief, occasional meetings to a systematic personal dialogue frequently sought; from a conversation about external matters to spiritual direction and sacramental confession.

The present situation and the fact that formation is carried out successively in different communities makes the influence of guidance all the more decisive for formation. On the other hand, experience teaches us that when there is no guidance or the guidance is superficial or discontinuous, it can undermine all the work of formation.

4.5.1 Community guidance

259. We have already spoken of the community as a formation setting and of the conditions required to make it so; we have also spoken of the role of the Rector in the community.

In the Salesian system, persons are guided in the first place by the *educative setting*, by what is heard and communicated in the community, by the inspiration which moves everything and everyone, guiding the work and promoting the kind of lived experience that becomes the constant criterion of one's identity and sense of direction.

The setting, the atmosphere, the interpersonal relationships among the confreres and with the educators, the direction given by those responsible in a participative style, the course of action according to a common plan and with definite objectives - all these factors serve to accompany and guide each member of the community in his personal growth, for they emphasize concern for the person and his vocation: they propose goals, suggest criteria, point out the steps to be taken, and fix the times for joint assessment and verification. Communities that are poor in formation, hardly capable of offering ideas and suggestions, and with little interaction among the members and limited participation in the common plan, are not much of a support for the individual confreres.

Taking care of *community guidance* in view of the formation of the confreres means ensuring the pedagogical and spiritual quality of their experience of community and the quality of animation and direction of the community. It is known as "community spiritual direction", and aims at building a pedagogically animated community with a clear sense of identity and an experience of community that directs, stimulates and sustains through the ways in which Salesian life and action expresses itself every day.

It is an undertaking for every formation setting, and especially for communities which are too small or too numerous.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Cfr. n. 280 below.

4.5.2 Personal guidance

260. If the experience of community is decisive for Salesian formation, *personalized guidance* is just as necessary in that it helps each one to assume and make his own the elements of his Salesian identity.

This guidance can take different forms and be carried out by different persons: the Rector of the community, the spiritual director (who can be the Rector himself), the confessor, those to whom the various aspects of formation are entrusted, the closest friends among the confreres - they can be helpful because of a true spiritual friendship - and the Provincial. The *Ratio* speaks clearly of different contributions, responsibilities and approaches in this common enterprise.

Striving for effective personal guidance means making sure of the presence, competence, dedication, agreement on criteria and convergence of the efforts of all persons called to render this service, each making his own contribution.

261. In keeping with Salesian tradition, a special role belongs to the *Rector* who has a direct responsibility towards each confrere and helps him realize his own personal vocation.⁷⁷ During the period of initial formation the Rector is responsible for the formation process of each one. "It is his specific duty to guide each confrere, helping him to understand and make his own the phase of formation he is engaged in. He maintains a frequent and cordial dialogue with the confrere, endeavours to know his strengths and weaknesses, makes him recommendations that are clear and demanding, proposes suitable goals, supports and guides him in times of difficulty, and together with him evaluates the progress he is making in his formation."⁷⁸

A typical expression of the service of the Rector is the *friendly talk*, an integrating element in the Salesian system of formation and a practical sign of care and concern for the person and his experience, for fraternal sharing and a joint assessment. Don Bosco saw the friendly talk with the Rector as one of the best opportunities for dialogue for the personal advantage of the confrere.⁷⁹ Showing this concern for each one's progress, the Constitutions lay down that each confrere, "faithful to Don Bosco's recommendation... meets frequently with his superior for a friendly talk".⁸⁰

During the period of initial formation, the friendly talk, carried out according to the spirit of the Constitutions, should be an occasion for genuine formation guidance. "An encounter which brings into play the values of Salesian life and the personal life of the confrere: it has to do with his virtues, attitudes, limitations, his successes and failures, his joys and sorrows, and his innermost needs."⁸¹ A form of spiritual guidance that helps to personalize the formation programme and to assimilate its contents.

For the confreres in formation, in keeping with our tradition, the frequency of the friendly talk remains fixed at "once a month".⁸² If the confrere so wishes, he can also manifest the state of his conscience.⁸³

A form of guidance explicitly provided for by the pedagogy of Salesian formation are the *periodic moments of personal assessment* ("scrutinies") by which the Council of the community

⁷⁷ Cfr. C 55.

⁷⁸ N. 233 above; cfr. n. 290 below.

⁷⁹ Cfr. C 70.

⁸⁰ C 70.

⁸¹ DSM 252.

⁸² R 79.

⁸³ Cfr. C 70.

helps the confrere to assess the situation of his personal formation, guides him and gives him practical encouragement in the process of his growth to maturity.⁸⁴

262. To strive for effective guidance means to ensure the quality of the service of *spiritual direction* carried out by the Rector or the other confreres who are available and prepared for the purpose.

The spiritual direction of conscience is *a help* offered to one who seeks the fullness of his Christian and religious vocation. It is a *ministry of enlightenment, support and guidance* in discerning God's will in order to achieve holiness; it motivates and moves a person to act, leading him to take some serious decisions in line with the Gospel and bringing him face to face with the process of growing in his Salesian vocation.

Spiritual direction is an excellent ministry in the Church. It *requires that the spiritual director* possess human equilibrium and wisdom, true fatherliness, a capacity for gratuitous love, a great availability and relationships that inspire trust and optimism. It is useful for the spiritual director to enjoy a certain standing because of his lived experience and in particular – for us – his Salesian experience; it is useful also to have a particular competence in the psychological and pedagogical sciences, an ability to read the movements of the Spirit in a person, to communicate, to listen and to empathize. He brings into play the very quality of his being – as a man, a believer, a consecrated person and a Salesian. But his personal qualities and experience are not enough; he absolutely needs a proper preparation and updating.

According to Salesian tradition, the *Rector of the formation community*, the “teacher and spiritual guide”,⁸⁵ the “leader of the community and its spiritual guide”,⁸⁶ is the spiritual director proposed to the confreres, without taking away their liberty to choose another spiritual director.

263. *The confessor*, whose action takes place in the sacramental sphere, plays a role of great importance in the guidance that is linked to formation. Don Bosco used to emphasize his pedagogical importance and efficacy in the growth of his boys. It should not be forgotten that in the *sacrament of Reconciliation* each confrere is offered a very practical and personalized spiritual direction, enriched by the efficacy proper of the sacrament. The confessor not only absolves sins but, while reconciling the penitent, encourages him along the path of fidelity to God and consequently in his own specific vocation too. Precisely for this reason it is appropriate that during initial formation the confreres have a regular confessor who is ordinarily a Salesian.⁸⁷

Care must be taken of *other forms of personal guidance* as well: they help the confrere to combine his formation experience with the exercise of youth pastoral ministry and the application to study.

To strive for effective guidance means to ensure a service geared to formation by *one who guides in certain specific areas*, such as, for instance, the pastoral field⁸⁸ or the study sector.⁸⁹

264. Guidance at the different levels of formation requires that *those who render the service* be, first of all, willing and dedicated; they must be aware that they are communicating the Lord's action, the Church's ministry, and the mind of the Congregation. Furthermore, certain convictions,

⁸⁴ Cfr. n. 294 below.

⁸⁵ C 55.

⁸⁶ C 104.

⁸⁷ Cfr. n. 117 above.

⁸⁸ Cfr. n. 199, 204 above.

⁸⁹ Cfr. n. 162 above.

attitudes and conditions are indispensable: a spiritual attitude and a faith perspective, the standpoint of the Salesian vocation, and therefore, a knowledge of the criteria for discerning it and the conditions for living it, a pedagogical sensitivity that fosters an atmosphere of freedom, a care for the person and his rhythm of growth, and some specific skills in the areas of human and spiritual formation. Each one must consider his contribution as interrelated to that of others, and must abide by the principles of prudence and justice which, depending on the circumstances, imply discretion or absolute respect for a professional⁹⁰ or sacramental secret.

To strive for effective guidance in the work of formation, it is absolutely necessary that *those who are responsible at provincial level* see to the preparation, updating, and real dedication to the task on the part of Rectors, confessors, and those entrusted with the responsibility for formation. They must take steps to frame a common policy regarding criteria and to secure a continuity of the process of guidance throughout the formation period and in the passage from one community to the next.

265. A key condition for guidance is *the outlook on formation assumed by the confrere in initial formation*.⁹¹ From the prenovitiate onwards he is aware that the development of his vocation is, in the first place, the work of the Lord who “makes use of human instruments”;⁹² that Salesian formation is a sincere dialogue and a sharing of responsibility with the community, the bearer of the charism; and that self-formation does not mean self-sufficiency or going it alone.

For this reason he takes the initiative and feels it his responsibility to have a spiritual director⁹³ and a confessor, to have with them and with his Rector a relationship marked by trust, openness and receptivity, to avail himself regularly of their service and of that of others who can guide him in his formation, and to accept personally the promptings of community guidance.

266. Guidance in the work of formation is a *part of animation*. It avoids two extreme attitudes: on the one hand, the attitude of bringing force to bear on the confrere in formation, imposing on him from the outside, in a certain way, another person’s experience, using a directive approach that takes away his responsibility; and on the other hand, the attitude of indifference, leaving everything to spontaneity and subjectivism, and failing to offer advice, to suggest or to correct. True guidance emphasizes the ability to accept and show consideration for the person, fosters communication, and requires personal responsibility.

Mindful of the goal, that is, of the purpose of Salesian formation, and keeping in mind the person and his rhythm of growth, *guidance* introduces the Salesian to self-knowledge, to a perception of himself and his values; fosters his self-acceptance and self-possession; helps him to be “self-detached” from whatever keeps him away from God and the values of his vocation; enables him to constantly seek the Lord’s will in concrete situations and see his life in this perspective; and prompts him to gradually organize his life in accordance with his vocation.

267. By observing the Rule of life and assimilating all that the animators of his community offer him, the *mature Salesian* finds support for living his vocation and a stimulus for lifelong fidelity. Even if there can be times and situations that require a personal self-examination and a thorough discernment, the methodical direction proper to the first period of formation is ordinarily not

⁹⁰ In juridical terms it is sometimes called a “confidential secret” or of conscience, in that it is confided to the conscience of someone in view of the office held or exercised.

⁹¹ Cfr. n. 213 above.

⁹² VC 66.

⁹³ Cfr. C 105.

necessary in the adult age. This is the way Don Bosco saw it, and it is confirmed by his own regular practice and by Salesian tradition.⁹⁴

4.6 PAY HEED TO DISCERNMENT

4.6.1 Discernment, a permanent aspect of Salesian life

268. To live his vocation with creative fidelity and as a permanent response, every Salesian has an indispensable need for an attitude of spiritual and pastoral discernment.

When community discernment is lived as an experience of faith and charity, it strengthens harmony and communion, sustains spiritual unity, deepens the sense of vocation, and encourages the search for authenticity and renewal. For this reason, every community, attentive to the signs of the Spirit and open to the promptings of the Church and the Congregation, cultivates an evangelical attitude to everything and seeks the Lord's will in patient brotherly dialogue and with a deep sense of responsibility.⁹⁵ This it does in an atmosphere of truth and mutual trust, in the light of the Word, in prayer, and with the help of reflection and sharing.

4.6.2 Discernment during the period of initial formation⁹⁶

269. Vocation discernment, as a service to the candidate and to the charism, enjoys a *decisive importance during initial formation* which is pedagogically geared to it. The various periods of formation "are necessary for both the candidate and the community, so that they may work together to discern God's will and correspond with it. The candidate gradually gets to know the Society, and the Society in turn can evaluate his suitability for Salesian life".⁹⁷ The admissions are occasions of synthesis during the process.

Discernment takes place in *close collaboration* between the candidate and the local and provincial community. In fact, at the basis of formation is a fundamental premise, viz. the will to carry out a process of discernment together, keeping an attitude of open communication and sincere joint responsibility, and paying heed to the voice of the Spirit and to the concrete channels through which he speaks.

The *object* of discernment are the values and attitudes required for living the Salesian vocation with maturity, joy and fidelity, viz., conditions of suitability, motivations and the right intention.

270. Discernment is a *key point of the methodology of formation*. It is therefore absolutely necessary to *meet its conditions* at the provincial and local levels and in all those who take part in it: its nature and characteristics must be known, the means suggested must be used, the specific times for it must be observed, and above all, those who are responsible for it must apply themselves to it constantly and after having received the necessary preparation.

⁹⁴ Cfr. DSM 266-267.

⁹⁵ Cfr. C 66.

⁹⁶ An ampler and more concrete presentation of Salesian vocation discernment during initial formation, and in particular, of discernment for admissions is found in the booklet, *Criteria and norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions*, which is a supplement to the *Ratio*.

⁹⁷ C 107.

To pay heed to discernment means in the first place to render effective the *commitment and collaboration of those who are responsible*.

The *candidate* must be prepared from the beginning of the process to take an active responsibility for his discernment, whether done by himself alone or in conjunction with others, as a necessary component of his attitude of formation. The candidate is the first person concerned to discover God's plan in his regard, and that is why he cultivates a continual openness to the voice of God and to the action of those responsible for his formation; he directs his life within a faith-perspective, and examines himself according to the criteria of a Salesian vocation. He seeks to know himself in all sincerity, to make himself known and to accept himself; he makes use of all the means and instruments that his formation offers him, in particular, formative guidance and a fraternal exchange of views, the friendly talk with the Rector, spiritual direction, the sacrament of Reconciliation, the assessments, and community discernment.

The responsibility of the provincial and the local community, on the other hand, is manifested in various ways. The *Provincial* seeks to forge agreement regarding the criteria of discernment and sees to it that the candidates are suitably known both by the members of the Provincial Council and by those responsible for the different phases: he fosters an attitude of discernment during the process of formation and communicates adequate information in the most convenient way possible.⁹⁸ For their part, the members of the Provincial Council are responsible for making the most personal and informed judgement they can about the candidate.

At local level, it is necessary to ensure the role of the *Rector and his Council*. They carry out a periodic discernment in the form of a quarterly assessment of the confreres in formation: they evaluate the progress each candidate has made in his vocation and offer appropriate suggestions and recommendations; on the occasion of a request for admission, they give their opinion. It is essential for the candidate to involve his spiritual director and his confessor in his discernment.

At the time of admissions, the *community* is invited to express its opinion in the most suitable way.⁹⁹

271. Whoever engages in a discernment must assume a *vocation standpoint* and an *attitude of faith*; he must show a *pedagogical sensitivity* and possess some *specific skills*. Vocation discernment is in fact a discovery of God's gift, recognized through a prudent and enlightened interpretation of everyday signs in the person himself; it is a collaboration with the Spirit. It entails an awareness of the spiritual channels through which God works, a human intuition that gives one a deep knowledge of human reality and its processes, and an attitude which can be trustful and yet demanding, show consideration for the person's pace of growth and yet require that he meet the requirements of his vocation.

272. Discernment has as its *reference point* *Salesian identity*, its constituent elements, and the conditions and requirements needed for living it; it is not something generic. It therefore requires a knowledge of and a conformity with the criteria laid down by the Congregation, and in the first place, with the criterion of the charism: this is in fact the basis of a genuine and faithful experience of one's vocation; it does away with preoccupations about numbers or usefulness, shallow displays of enthusiasm, and commitments made by candidates whose suitability is fragile or untested. When someone takes part in a discernment he acts in the name of the Congregation, which is responsible for the charism.

273. Because of the duration of the process of discernment, the succession and diversity of communities in which it is carried out, and the multiplicity of those responsible for and involved in

⁹⁸ Cfr. n. 298 below.

⁹⁹ Cfr. R 81.

it, there is need for a *common policy with regard to the criteria, the joint endeavour of everyone concerned*, and an awareness of the progressive nature of the process and the specificity of each occasion of discernment. Discernment is carried out, keeping an eye on the unity and evolution of the person, seeking continuity in the knowledge that there is of him, and evaluating his progress.

On the other hand, the progressive nature of the process implies that there are, in a certain way, criteria for an initial assessment (basic suitability), for intermediate assessments (criteria of growth), and for assessments prior to definitive commitments. Consideration for a person's gradual growth means giving time for knowing and assessing him, picking the right moment to make decisions, and choosing not to unnecessarily prolong problematic or doubtful situations which offer no serious hope of improvement.¹⁰⁰

To take part in discernment is to be conscious of collaborating in a team effort and engaging in a coherent and open process.

274. *Admissions* to the various commitments along the path of one's vocation are important occasions for discernment, both for the candidate who presents his request and for the one who is called to evaluate it; they gather in the fruit of a permanent attitude and give it the form of an opinion or consensus into which flow knowledge, an exchange of views and evaluation. The seriousness with which the process of admission is conducted by the candidate, by the community and by those directly responsible at the local and provincial levels, is a proof of the high quality of the discernment. Formation and perseverance in vocation are particularly affected by admission, and consequently, by the discernment done at the beginning of the formation process and in view of the perpetual profession.

275. Discernment depends on *knowledge of the elements needed for the required evaluation*, elements which refer to the person and his experience, aptitudes and motivations. To arrive at such an informed and well-grounded discernment, everyone, according to his situation and role, has to make use of some necessary means and procedures: exchanging views in a daily life lived according to the spirit of the Preventive System, different forms of personal relationship, dialogue with the candidate who has been advised to practise self-observation, the assessments, the systematic gathering and evaluation of information, using prudence and respect, and recourse to the contribution of experts in different fields.

4.6.3 Discernment in some particular circumstances

276. There can be times in the life of a Salesian when he experiences the need for a deeper self-examination, a more careful assessment of the course of his life, a review of his decisions either in order to reaffirm them or to choose his vocation anew. He can be confronted by new situations or challenges, moments of difficulty or doubt, situations in which he finds himself strongly lacking in motivation or seriously compromised.

In such cases, it is so very necessary that the confrere assume a real attitude of spiritual discernment, free of internal and external pressures, and open to dialogue. He must avoid isolating himself or taking decisions on his own, give himself the necessary time, and accept the opportunities and means offered him. For its part, the community, through those who are responsible, will esteem, understand and guide him in a respectful and brotherly way, and have recourse to ordinary and extraordinary means to give him support in an appropriate manner.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Cfr. n. 321 below.

¹⁰¹ For the guidance of confreres in particular situations, cfr. ISM 390-395, DSM 268.

A practical opportunity to verify the quality of discernment during initial formation is to evaluate the perseverance of the confreres and analyze the departures from the Congregation during initial formation and in the first years of perpetual commitment. By reading their vocation stories it will be possible to understand whether the different instances of discernment and admission, the criteria applied and the methodology followed, the actions of those responsible, the attitude of the candidate or confrere, and the way of perceiving and accompanying the eventual crises were all adequate or whether they are focusing the spotlight on certain aspects to which greater attention needs to be paid.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

277. ***Each Salesian** accepts responsibility for his own formation and engages in a constant effort of conversion and renewal.¹⁰² He formulates his own personal plan of life, drawing on his own experience and on the vocation plan of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and he verifies it at certain key moments.*

278. *Formation aims at reaching the Salesian in depth, helping him to experience the values of his vocation in a process he makes his own and which involves all those who are responsible.*

279. ***Each Salesian community** is the natural environment for the vocational growth of the confreres.¹⁰³*

280. *Let **the Province** ensure the conditions for a genuine formation experience, and in particular: a climate of formation in all communities, a style of life and pastoral work, the service of animation on the part of Rectors and others who are responsible, a consistency of formation communities in terms of numbers and quality, especially through stable and well-staffed formation teams, the formation plan, and the continuity of the formation process.*

281. *Let the **Provincial Commission for formation** pay attention to the unity of the process of formation in the Province, the attitude of discernment, the uniform application of criteria, and the continuity of methodology.*

Formation communities and those entrusted with responsibility for formation

282. *“Initial formation is ordinarily carried out in **communities specifically designed for this purpose**.”¹⁰⁴ Only in special cases may the Rector Major permit those in formation to form part of other communities.*

Let those who hold responsibility ensure the qualitative strength of the formation community, paying special attention to the conditions required by the process of formation.

283. *Let the formation community be made up of a **number of members** that is sufficient for developing the formation experience, avoiding too small a number as this does not allow the minimum conditions for some aspects of formation, as well as too large a number as this is an obstacle to the personalization and guidance of the formation process.*

¹⁰² Cfr. C 99.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ C 103.

284. *Let **those entrusted with formation** be men of faith, capable of dialogue, having sufficient pastoral experience and able to communicate the Salesian ideal in a vibrant way. Let the Provincial choose a Rector and a team of formation personnel who are specially prepared, above all as regards community and personal spiritual direction.*¹⁰⁵

*Let the guides in formation communities be aware of their role, constitute with the Rector a group that is convinced of its common responsibility, and let them ensure that the confreres in formation have the opportunities for a valid experience, guidance and discernment.*¹⁰⁶

Let the formation teams include Salesian Brothers, and let their specific preparation for this task be seen to.

285. *The Provincial **plan for the preparation and specialization** of the confreres should spell out its programme of training in pedagogy, formation methodology and Salesian spirituality for those confreres who are destined to provide the service of formation: Rectors, directors of novices, and formation guides.*¹⁰⁷

*The Provincial should provide that the Rectors of the formation communities have a periodic and specific updating to help them fulfil their duty of guidance as well as community and personal spiritual direction.*¹⁰⁸

In a similar way, opportunities for higher specialization and retraining should be offered to the other formation guides.

286. *Let those who are responsible for formation at different levels (Provincials, the Regional Councillor, the Councillor for formation) promote initiatives and forms of **collaboration for training** those entrusted with the work of formation.*

287. *Let the **formation community**, a real training-ground for a person to grow to maturity, be distinguished by its atmosphere of family spirit and fraternal sharing, the focusing on the common purpose, the sharing of responsibility in attaining Salesian ideals, and the involvement of everyone in formulating and evaluating the community plan and programme of activities.*

288. *Care should be taken of the community **environment** - the premises, rooms and equipment – as they enhance community and religious life (the chapel, the library, the audio-visual room, the recreation hall, etc.).*¹⁰⁹

289. *The formation community must be an **open community**, according to the educative style of Don Bosco, and in contact with the realities of the Church and society of which it forms a part.*¹¹⁰

It must keep itself informed of the situation and the pastoral programme of the particular Church¹¹¹ and devise practical ways of involving itself;¹¹² it should have meetings and a mutual communication of experiences¹¹³ with the formation communities of other religious Institutes; it should remain attentive to the cultural and youth situations.

¹⁰⁵ Cfr. R 78.

¹⁰⁶ Cfr. C 104, 101; GC21 112.

¹⁰⁷ Cfr. GC21 276.

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. GC21 252.

¹⁰⁹ Cfr. ASC 276, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. SGC 679a; R 89.

¹¹¹ Cfr. MuR 47.

¹¹² Cfr. MuR 30a; C 48.

¹¹³ Cfr. MuR 48.

290. *Let the **sense of belonging to one's Province** be cultivated during initial formation. For those confreres who are sent to formation communities that belong to other Provinces, it not only helps that there are personnel from their own Province on the formation team, but also that they receive visits from their Provincial or from other members of the Provincial Council, they have an exchange of news, meetings are arranged for communicating information and fostering communion with the confreres of their own Province, the programme of their activities during the period of their academic vacation is agreed upon by the Rector of their community and their own Provincial, and other forms of communication are available to them.*

291. *In the formation community, spiritual animation and personal guidance are the **primary responsibility of the Rector**.*¹¹⁴

It is his duty to carry out a formative and pastoral animation and spiritual direction through the paternal exercise of his authority, the meetings of the Council and the Assembly of the confreres,¹¹⁵ conferences and meetings,¹¹⁶ the formulation of the local formation plan,¹¹⁷ the annual programme,¹¹⁸ the community day, public and private exhortations, the daily 'good-night',¹¹⁹ the friendly talk once a month,¹²⁰ personal spiritual direction,¹²¹ and a recourse to the opportunities offered in the area and at provincial level.

292. ***The Rector of the community** is always also the spiritual director proposed to, but not imposed on, the individual confreres. The confreres in formation can approach, in addition to the Rector, also the confessors and other confreres who are capable and prepared.*¹²²

Even when the Rector of the community is not the spiritual director of a particular confrere, he remains the one responsible for his personal process of formation; this means that the individual confrere deals with him in a relationship of openness and trust, giving him the knowledge he needs to direct, discern and decide.

If a confrere should ask for a special confessor or spiritual director, the superior should grant it to him,¹²³ but it should be kept in mind that in the period of initial formation it is highly desirable that such a person be a Salesian and that his service be permanent.

*The spiritual guide in the novitiate is the director of novices.*¹²⁴

293. *At the request of a confrere in formation, it is possible also for the Rector and the director of novices to offer their **ministry in the sacrament of Reconciliation**, but they may do so only extraordinarily, and provided that at the moment of admissions they are able to draw a serene distinction between the internal forum which they learn in the sacramental sphere and the external forum which is the only one they may refer to at that moment.*¹²⁵

¹¹⁴ Cfr. SGC 678b; C 104.

¹¹⁵ Cfr. C 178-186.

¹¹⁶ Cfr. R 175.

¹¹⁷ Cfr. C 44b; R 4b, 5.

¹¹⁸ Cfr. C 181.1; R 184.3

¹¹⁹ Cfr. R 48.

¹²⁰ Cfr. R 79.

¹²¹ Cfr. R 78.

¹²² Cfr. SGC 678c.

¹²³ Cfr. ASC 244, p. 97.

¹²⁴ Cfr. C 112.

¹²⁵ "The director and assistant director of novices, and the rector of a seminary or of any other institute of education, are not to hear the sacramental confessions of their students resident in the same house, unless in individual instances the students of their own accord request it"(CIC, can. 985)

Assessments

294. *“Those being formed and their guides must carry out with shared responsibility a **periodic planning and evaluation** of their work.”*¹²⁶

295. *From time to time the **Rector and his Council** should assess how well they practise animation and community and personal guidance.*

296. *During the period of initial formation, scrutinies must be conducted every three months to evaluate and foster each person’s process of formation. The objectives of the phase and the progress of the confrere should be examined together, and his growth in his vocation must be assessed in continuity with previous assessments. The confrere himself should be involved in the assessment in different ways.*¹²⁷

297. *Within the community (Rector, Council, formation guides, and confessors) and between the formation communities (prenovitiate, novitiate, postnovitiate, practical training, and specific formation) a **uniform policy regarding the criteria for vocation discernment** and admissions should be promoted, based on what is laid down in “Criteria and norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions”.*

For the same purpose, meetings should be held between those responsible at the local level and the Provincial Council.

298. *Let the **Provincial** see that, especially at the beginning of a phase of formation, those in formation are known by the ones responsible for that particular phase, and let him arrange for the communication of adequate information throughout the whole process of formation in the most convenient way possible.*

299. *“A regular and systematic use should be made of **psychological and pedagogical aids**” for the moments of discernment and ordinary guidance, and this “should not be restricted merely to difficult cases”.*¹²⁸

Care must be taken to see that the contributions of professionals to the initial discernment and to subsequent guidance are consistent with the Salesian vocation. It is therefore desirable that experts be chosen who have a sympathetic approach to the religious vocation, and, as far as possible, sufficient knowledge of Salesian life.

The final decision about the suitability of candidates is the duty of the Salesians who hold responsibility.

Interprovincial collaboration

300. *In more than one situation the conditions for ensuring the consistency of formation centres in terms of quality and numbers are such that it is not easy for a single Province all by itself to meet them. In such cases, it is desirable that a few Provinces, especially if they belong to the same cultural context, pool their resources to set up **interprovincial formation structures**.*

*Interprovincial collaboration must be translated into a **real sharing of responsibility** and be expressed also through the implementation and functioning of intermediate structures (such as the “curatorium”, commissions, etc.) which make it possible for the Provinces to take an effective part*

¹²⁶ R 78.

¹²⁷ Cfr. OT 11; ASC 293, p. 3-12.

¹²⁸ SGC 673a; cfr. RFIS 39; SaC 163; OT 11.

*in determining the direction of formation (the formation plan), ensuring the conditions and means for realizing it (personnel, structures, finances, etc.) and carrying out the proper assessments.*¹²⁹

Vocation discernment

301. *The **pattern for admission** to profession, to the ministries and to orders should include the following stages, while making provision for the variety of situations:*

- *a talk between the person concerned and his Rector and the submission of his application;*
- *the opinion of the community,¹³⁰ and, respecting the norms of prudence, possibly of those members of the educative and pastoral community who are in a position to make a significant contribution;*
- *the opinion of the Provincial Council of origin (when the confrere is outside his own Province);*
- *the opinion of the local Council;*
- *the vote of the Provincial Council and the decision by the Provincial.*

302. *“**The local community**, since it shares the responsibility for the development of each confrere, is invited to express its opinion whenever one of its members seeks admission to profession or to holy orders. This will be done in the form most in keeping with charity.”¹³¹ It should be kept in mind that the Rector and his Council have a juridical responsibility for giving their opinion to the Provincial.¹³²*

303. *The **members of the Provincial Council** who have the duty of giving their consent for admission to profession, to the ministries and to orders¹³³, must be enabled in every way possible to know the candidates and follow their preparation; they need forms of contact and verification that permit them to cast a responsible and motivated vote.*

304. *When a confrere or a novice experiences **difficulty with regard to his vocation**, the superiors and formation guides should strive to follow his discernment with special care in order to help him to clarify his motivations and discover God’s design for his life. The process of discernment needs to be applied also in the possible case of someone requesting to choose another vocation.*

Availing himself of the proper assistance and using prudence and discretion, the Provincial or the Rector of the formation community should help those who leave the Congregation to insert themselves in their milieu in terms of a profession and an apostolate.

305. *To **evaluate, from the formation point of view, the departures** of confreres with temporary vows, the Provincial should ask the one who leaves the Congregation when his vows expire to put in writing the reason for his decision. This information should be communicated with due prudence to the General Secretariat.*

306. *Let the Province undertake a periodic assessment of **vocational perseverance** for the sake of a better understanding of the situation and in order to adapt its formation pedagogy. Let the results*

¹²⁹ Cfr. GC21 277, 250b.

¹³⁰ Cfr. R 81.

¹³¹ R 81.

¹³² Cfr. C 108.

¹³³ Cfr. *ibid*

be communicated to the General Councillor for formation, who will offer some criteria for carrying out this assessment.

Second Part

SALESIAN FORMATION IN GENERAL

Enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco's spirit, the Salesian commits himself to a formation process which will last all his life and will keep pace with his maturing in other ways. He learns by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation at the various moments of his life and accepts the ascetical demands it makes on him.

With the help of Mary, his Mother and Teacher, he gradually becomes a pastor and educator of the young in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced.

(Constitution 98)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SALESIAN FORMATION PROCESS

5.1 “A FORMATION PROCESS WHICH WILL LAST ALL HIS LIFE”¹

307. To live the Salesian vocation is to take part in a story in which God’s initiative and human venture are intertwined.² It is to engage in a living dialogue in which call and response are not passing episodes but a continuing experience of “following” Jesus. What was said in the previous chapters about Salesian formation and the conditions for its personal assimilation is put into action in a *formation process lasting a whole lifetime*.

Don Bosco’s experience in living his vocation – an experience of his founding charism – testifies to his *continual attitude of openness to the promptings of the Spirit and his courageous and ever-new response at all times*. He let himself be guided by the Spirit, responding with docility to his inspirations. He had a feeling of being called and challenged by each situation, especially that of the young, and he gave the whole of himself in responding creatively at every moment.

The Constitutions present our Salesian experience as “a response which we continually renew”:³ “enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco’s spirit, the Salesian commits himself to a formation process which will last all his life and will keep pace with his maturing in other ways.”⁴

308. The maturing of a vocation winds through a single formation process in which two *differentiating moments* can be distinguished: initial formation and ongoing formation.

Initial formation, carried out from the start with an attitude of continuing formation, extends from the first leanings towards Salesian life to the strengthening of motivations, to identifying with the Salesian project to be lived in a particular Province. It reaches as far as full incorporation and permanent membership of the Salesian Congregation in perpetual profession and, for members called to the Salesian vocation in the priesthood, as far as priestly ordination.

Initial formation develops through periods having well-defined formation objectives: it “is not so much a period of marking time as already one of work and holiness. It is a time of dialogue between God, whose initiative calls him and leads him forward, and his own freedom as he gradually assumes responsibility for his own formation”.⁵ It is a time of increasingly tough decisions, a time of dialogue and interaction with the community, comprising moments of assessment, synthesis and renewed commitment; in short, it is a time of spiritual tension towards the goal.

¹ C 98.

² Cfr C 1.

³ C 195.

⁴ C 98.

⁵ C 105.

309. Through his perpetual profession – and in the case of priests, through his priestly ordination – the Salesian enters totally into the experience of faithfully living his Salesian life with the support of the grace of his *continuing formation*.

In fact, precisely because it is a matter of transforming the whole person, the formation process cannot be reduced to its initial phase. “The consecrated person can never claim to have completely

brought to life the ‘new creature’ who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ.

Initial formation, then, should be closely connected with continuing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone's part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives.”⁶

Ongoing formation consists “in a constant effort of conversion and renewal”:⁷ it is growth in human qualities, it is conforming oneself more closely to Christ, it is renewing one's fidelity to Don Bosco, so that one may respond to the ever new demands arising from the situation of the young and the poor.⁸ It is a journey that is completed according to the condition of life of each one.

310. Throughout this journey Salesian formation demands at one and the same time a *basic equality and a differentiation* that respect and promote the specificity of the different vocations. The Constitutions say: “Lay Salesians, future priests and permanent deacons normally have the same initial formation and follow curricula of equivalent level, with the same phases and similar content and objectives. The necessary differences are determined by the specific vocation of each one, by his personal gifts and inclinations and the duties of our apostolate”.⁹

311. The Constitutions describe how the vocation and formation of the Salesian are realized *in phases or successive moments*:

- the prenovitiate, a time for a deeper study of one's initial choice of vocation, and preparation for the novitiate;
- the novitiate, the beginning of the experience of religious life;
- the period of temporary profession in its different phases: the immediate postnovitiate, which helps growth in an integration of faith, culture and life; practical training, which aims at forging a personal synthesis out of an intense lived experience of Salesian activity; specific formation, which completes initial formation and, in the case of clerics, continues until priestly ordination;
- the period of preparation for the perpetual profession, which verifies the spiritual maturity required and leads to a definitive commitment; and
- ongoing formation, which continues the maturing process until the end of one's life.

5.2 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FORMATION PROCESS¹⁰

312. The *formation process* is a lived experience determined by Salesian identity. It integrates different elements and has its own characteristics.

⁶ VC 69.

⁷ C 99.

⁸ Cfr. C 118.

⁹ C. 106, quoted in part by FSDB 49.

¹⁰ When speaking of the formation process, we are here referring above all to initial formation. Further on we shall speak specifically of ongoing formation.

It brings together the community effort inspired by concern for the growth of each of its members, and the personal responsibility of every confrere.

5.2.1 A personalized process

The formation process focuses on the candidate or confrere, considering him in his concrete reality: age, character, endowments of mind and heart, family of origin, education received, journey of faith and vocation completed, experiences lived.

Each candidate or confrere has his own way of relating to the Salesian project: he has his own pace and his own approach. The one who accompanies the formation process takes these variables into account and helps the person to integrate them and live his Salesian identity in a serene, faithful and personal manner.

He pays attention during the process to his psychological traits and to the socio-cultural situations which in some way affect his readiness for formation and its pace.

Whoever conducts the process, giving consideration to these characteristics, assists the candidate or confrere in progressively maturing his choices and taking his decisions at the right moment according to the level of maturity required, without haste but also without unjustified and harmful delays. In this connection it is helpful to proceed according to a *personal plan* that has been tailored to specific formation objectives.

5.2.2 A communitarian process

313. Through various intermediaries, the community accepts and accompanies the candidate or confrere in formation. It supports him with its help, offers him the possibility of a serious dialogue in his search for God's will and carries out the necessary discernment. It provides him with a community life that is conducive to his formation, and offers him an environment and the means to promote his growth.

Furthermore, the provincial community involves him in its Formation Plan and establishes an animating nucleus to guide him and to ensure that everything and everyone converges on the objectives to be attained.

In his turn, as he forges ahead, the Salesian brings to his community the riches of his gifts of nature and of grace.

5.2.3 A comprehensive and diversified process

314. The formation process winds through phases and diversified experiences, bringing all the aspects of formation together – the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the educative and pastoral – in a single harmonious movement. At the same time, at different moments depending on the proper purpose of each phase, a specific aspect is accentuated and it enriches the other aspects with new contents, sensitivities and motivations.

The subject responsible for formation in a particular context, the Province, ensures the unity of the entire formation process as it unfolds in different phases, in different formation communities and in initiatives of ongoing formation.

5.2.4 A continuous and gradual process

315. Through a *progressive and continual procedure*, the candidate or confrere strengthens his identification with the Salesian project, grows in suitability and consolidates his motivations: every phase of his formation is a continuation of the previous one and a preparation for the next. The passage from one phase to another is sensitive and deserves careful guidance.

The principle of using a gradual approach implies that consideration is given at one and the same time to quality as a goal, a pedagogy and a criterion of discernment, and that the process evolves with realism and flexibility in effecting formation.

Such a continual and gradual process never comes to an end. Configuring oneself to Christ in the footsteps of Don Bosco is an ongoing task that lasts all through life.

5.2.5 An inculturated process

316. The Constitutions require the Provinces to carry out the formation process *according to the needs of their own cultural context*:¹¹ that is, the needs arising from the candidate and his culture and those deriving from the context in which the Salesian charism must find expression.

The charism is fundamentally something internal – the following of Jesus Christ more closely as Don Bosco did – and it must be translated into a lived experience that permeates the Salesian's entire life in all its individual and community aspects. It is the whole of his person that must be taken up and transformed by the charism.

This means that the values inherent in the charism have to assume and transform every aspect of his culture, incarnating itself within the concrete context in which he lives. It follows that the formation process, mindful of the candidate's situation, has to lead him to a deeper assimilation of the charism and to a change of mentality. His progressive growth in his vocation must modify his personal habits and relationships with others, with God and with the very life of the Salesian community, until the charism leavens everything that is human in him and gives it a new appearance.¹²

Such a process calls for dialogue and discernment and is carried out in communion with the local, the provincial and the world community.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

317. *To ensure the unity and continuity of initial formation while it is carried out in successive periods, in different communities and sometimes in different Provinces, it is necessary that it follow a comprehensive plan and that it seek a linkage between phases and a convergence of everyone's efforts.*

¹¹ Cfr. C 101.

¹² Cfr. VECCHI J., "Look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting", AGC 362 (1998), p. 20.

318. The **phases of formation** that prepare for full incorporation into the Congregation through perpetual profession are necessary for both the candidate and the community so that they may work together to discern God's will and correspond with it. The **formation objectives** of these periods must be attained also by the one who enters the Society after completing the studies envisaged by the formation curriculum.¹³

319. During this period, those in initial formation should be helped to deepen their identity as consecrated persons, to develop solid convictions about the educative value of consecration itself and to assume an attitude of continuing formation.¹⁴

320. For **admission to the different phases of formation**, to profession, to the ministries and to sacred orders and to verify the fulfilment of objectives for each formation period there is need to effectively assess positive indications of the candidate's suitability and maturity as regards the commitment to be assumed; there also has to be verified his ability to tackle the next phase of formation successfully. Neither the absence of counter-indications nor the attainment of academic objectives is sufficient.¹⁵

321. Let particular attention be given to the **passage from one phase to the next**, and let there be a pedagogy to help the confrere enter into the new period of his formation with full awareness and responsibility.

One must not be allowed to begin the phases of formation or to assume commitments (professions, ministries, sacred orders) if he is not found suitable.¹⁶

In this case let the confrere in formation be placed in a situation that best enables him to reach the level of suitability required.

While keeping in mind the gradual approach to formation, steps must be taken to avoid prolonging problematic and indecisive situations which do not hold out serious prospects for improvement.

322. Let the formation process be so arranged as to take into consideration the **different forms of the one Salesian vocation**:

- let Salesian clerics and brothers be aware of the characteristics of their specific form of vocation and let them grow in mutual harmony, allowing for differentiation and interdependence;
- let those entrusted with formation have knowledge of the Salesian identity in its lay, priestly and diaconal forms, and make them known and appreciated.

323. In all the phases of formation, account should be taken of the basic equality and of the differentiation due to the specific nature of the vocation of each person in formation. In particular

- in the prenovitiate, the Salesian consecrated vocation is presented in its two forms, ministerial and lay, and also by meeting significant figures; in this way the prenovice can become better acquainted with the forms of the Salesian vocation and reach a first orientation, without arriving at a decision about them;
- in the novitiate, each novice under the guidance of the director of novices, carries out a process of discernment regarding both forms of the Salesian vocation, in order to arrive at a specific option for his future as a Salesian Brother or a Salesian Priest/Permanent Deacon; this discernment and vocational choice precede the request for admission to the

¹³ Cfr. C 107.

¹⁴ Cfr. GC24 167.

¹⁵ Cfr. C 108.

¹⁶ Cfr. The project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 835.

first profession, in which it is necessary to express one's own vocational decision; in this process the Provincial is also involved;

- *in the postnovitiate period, the Salesian Brothers with the help of their Rector and Provincial carry out a process of discernment with regard to the professional area in which they feel called to develop their own gifts and capabilities in response to the needs of the Province; in this phase they undertake two or three years of philosophical and pedagogical studies;*
- *having completed at least two years of philosophical and pedagogical studies, the Salesian Brothers begin or continue a period of "technical, scientific or professional training" for the purpose of acquiring a recognised "specific qualification,"¹⁷ if possible before practical training;*
- *for practical training the Salesian Brothers are preferably placed in situations where they can exercise their professional qualification and assess the discernment undertaken in the postnovitiate regarding their future professional area;¹⁸*
- *the specific formation for the Salesian Brothers, as for the Salesian clerics, immediately follows practical training,¹⁹ it lasts for two years and is carried out in one of the regional or inter-regional centres approved by the Rector Major with the General Council;*
- *preparation for perpetual profession is done as far as possible, by the Salesian Brothers and the clerics together, before or during the specific formation;*
- *the "quinquennium" involves both the Salesian priests/permanent deacons in the first five years after their ordination and the Salesian Brothers in the first five years after their specific formation;*
- *after specific formation, at a suitable time, if necessary every Salesian Brother should have the possibility of completing some specialisation in the specific field of his profession and in the skills needed to fulfil the various tasks and roles that will be entrusted to him. In this way he completes the professional qualification begun during the time of temporary profession.*

Decisions regarding the formation curriculum for the Salesian Brothers should be included in the formation section of the Province Directory.

324. *"The concrete possibilities of living the **consecrated lay state** in the Congregation are many and varied. Such a diversity requires that the Provincial Formation Directories set out a serious formation programme, but one which is flexible and adapts to the very nature of the various tasks and to the candidate's actual possibilities."²⁰*

325. *Let initial formation mature a sense of **belonging to the Salesian Family and to the Salesian Movement** in which consecrated persons and laity, living different vocations, share the same spirit and mission.²¹ In particular:*

- the identity and characteristic aspects of the Salesian Family and of the different groups should be made known;

- "the contents and values of the lay state should be presented; the young confreres should be enabled to grow and mature together with the laity, to acquire the ability to take part in their formation and animation, and to promote lay vocations";²²

¹⁷ Cf. Reg. 95.

¹⁸ Cf. FSDB 442.

¹⁹ Cf. C 116, FSDB 479.

²⁰ GC21 301.

²¹ Cfr. GC24 142.

²² GC24 147.

- *emphasis must be laid on giving Salesians the ability to work with a comprehensive outlook and engage in overall planning within the sphere of the educative and pastoral community;*
- *the Provincial Formation Plan should provide for diversified and graded contents and experiences for the reciprocal and complementary formation of Salesians and lay people during initial and ongoing formation; the programme of formation should take account of the different nature of their vocations and the times needed for their human, affective and apostolic maturing.*²³

326. *During initial formation, consideration must be given to **the rites** from which the confreres come or to which they belong and the necessary preparation must be offered them to carry out the mission in the contexts of the different rites.*²⁴

327. *The criteria and norms that refer to the aptitudes of the candidate, the conditions, the impediments and the juridical requirements for admission to the prenovitiate and novitiate, to first profession, to the renewal of the temporary profession, to perpetual profession, and to the ministries and sacred orders are more amply developed and commented upon in “**Criteria and norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions.**”*

²³ Cfr. GC24 142.

²⁴ In the case of candidates belonging to the various Oriental rites, it should be borne in mind that the prescribed “No Objection” certificate - together with the attached permission of “biritualism” - has to be requested from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, in accordance with can. 517 § 2 of the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, 1990. The request of the candidate, as also the opinion of the Provincial, must be forwarded to the General Secretariat.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PRENOVITIATE

6.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

328. According to our Constitutions, “a period of special preparation is required immediately prior to the novitiate to deepen the candidate’s vocational choice and verify his suitability for beginning the novitiate. This preparation is made through an experience of Salesian community and apostolic life”;¹ it is known as the prenovitiate. It is the first phase of formation of the Salesian. With the prenovitiate, in fact, *there begins the initial formation of the candidate who asks to enter the Salesian Congregation* to dedicate his life to God in the service of youth in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

329. This first phase of formation presupposes that the prenovice has *previously gone through an appropriate period and experience of vocational growth, human and Christian maturing*, guidance, community living and an exercise of Salesian pastoral ministry – all things one cannot do without. “To anyone who is thinking of becoming a Salesian”, our Constitutions say, the Province offers “an environment and suitable conditions... to enable him to discern his own vocation and to mature as a man and a Christian. In this way, and with the help of a spiritual guide, he is able to make a choice with greater awareness of what he is doing, and without any external or internal pressures”.²

This experience is generally given the name of “*aspirantate*”,³ although the term may vary according to places, cultures and susceptibilities. It aims at making known the Salesian consecrated vocation, fostering a knowledge of oneself and of God’s will, and carrying out a vocational discernment; it is conducted in the manner and time most suited to the situation and the needs of the candidates. It is a necessary experience, since the candidates come from a great variety of settings, and their ages, family backgrounds, levels of personal maturity, and experiences of life, faith, culture, and lived contact with Don Bosco and the Salesian reality are very different.

330. Only when the candidate “*has made his option for the Salesian life*”⁴ and shows, in the judgement of those responsible, a corresponding human, Christian and Salesian maturity,⁵ can he be admitted to the prenovitiate.⁶ Even if at the beginning of the prenovitiate “it is not required that a candidate for the religious life be able to assume all of the obligations of the religious life immediately,... [he] should be found capable of doing so progressively. The possibility of making such a judgment justifies the time and means employed in reaching it. This is the purpose of the stage preparatory to the novitiate.”⁷

After a serious work of vocational guidance and in line with it, the Province *seriously sets*

¹ C 109.

² C 109.

³ Cf. R 17; SGC 662; ASC 273, p. 40-48; GC21 118; GC26 54, 58, 69-73.

⁴ GC21 267.

⁵ Cf. ASC 276, 71-72.

⁶ Cf. GC21 267.

⁷ PI 42.

about organizing the prenovitiate as a specific phase of formation. It takes steps to ensure a personalized and inculturated formation, provides a clear and definite plan, and maintains due flexibility and creativity in the structure and the programme of formation.

The importance of the prenovitiate, which often conditions the subsequent phases and especially the novitiate, requires that it “*usually last a year and not be ordinarily inferior to six months*”.⁸ Starting the prenovitiate with an appropriate celebration helps to inculcate in the candidates the seriousness and importance of the step they are taking.

331. The prenovitiate has the following *specific objectives*, which need to be known by the candidate and pursued by way of concrete formation steps:

- maturing as a man and as a Christian;
- getting to know his own vocation and deepening the motivations of his vocational choice; - having a community and apostolic experience, and reflecting seriously on the Salesian life and mission;
- verifying whether he has the necessary suitability to begin the novitiate;
- making a decision in the knowledge of what he is doing and free from internal and external pressure;
- adopting an explicit and practical attitude to his own formation.

In the same way, the time of the prenovitiate allows the Congregation to judge the suitability and maturity of the candidate to enter the novitiate.

6.2 THE FORMATION PROGRAMME

332. The nature of the prenovitiate calls for a *personalized formation* of the candidate, with a *special attention paid to his human and Christian aspects*, so as to guarantee the proper maturity to begin the novitiate experience.

6.2.1 Human formation

The first requirement of formation is to be able to find and develop a *solid human precondition* in the candidate. Growth in human maturity must lay the foundation for an authentic development of a vocation in view of community living, an ability to relate in educational and apostolic work, and an assumption of commitments deriving from the evangelical counsels.

For this task which belongs to the prenovitiate more than to the other formation phases, it is very useful and warmly recommended to have recourse to the services of a professional *psychologist*, not only in order to verify whether the prenovice has those prior aspects of human suitability that are necessary to embark on the path of formation, but also and above all to help him acquire self-knowledge, self-esteem, emotional stability, affective and sexual maturity, and the ability to relate to others.

Knowledge of the *family* too is of great help in understanding the prenovice’s human experience: his inclinations, his life-story, his shortcomings and difficulties, and his resources. Some family situations also need to be verified to ensure the suitability of the candidates to consecrated life or because they need to be integrated with positive experiences.

⁸ GC21 270 and R 88.

6.2.1.1 *Physical condition and health*

333. The Salesian life and mission habitually require physical resistance and good health, as well as a capacity for sacrifice and a demanding life. That is why the prenovice is taught to take reasonable care of his health, moderate his food and sleep, practise gymnastics and sport, and get accustomed to manual work.

During the prenovitiate there must be a verification of the *physical condition and good state of health* needed to observe the Constitutions of the Society.⁹ Proper medical checks are also carried out before admission to this stage of formation.

6.2.1.2 *Knowing oneself and making oneself known*

334. Assisted by his community and spiritual guide, the prenovice *strives to acquire a thorough knowledge of himself and with full awareness takes charge of the course of his life*. Drawing on the positive side of himself, he learns to handle his problematic areas and difficulties as well. He becomes conscious of his qualities and limitations, and is serene and grateful for what he is.

Openly and courageously he faces his past, and is not afraid to speak of himself and his family. He learns to reflect on his own conduct, on his experiences, on the reasons for the decisions he takes and on his way of thinking. He receives help to discover his unconscious motives and to distinguish between desires and true motivations.

This sincere and keen insight into himself becomes a first basis for discernment.

6.2.1.3 *A serene affectivity*

335. The prenovice becomes aware of the human value of his sexuality and discovers the impulses of his own affectivity. He identifies himself with his own male condition and matures “the acceptance of the other, man or woman, respecting his or her own difference”.¹⁰ He learns to sincerely appreciate his own feelings, impulses and motivations, and *to live them in harmony with the values of his celibate vocation*. He is helped to attain sufficient certainty of being loved and of being able to love. He maintains his bonds of affection with his family through a relationship of gratitude and sincere love; at the same time he matures a sense of belonging to his community. He learns to detach himself from ties that reduce his autonomy and slow down or disturb the realization of his vocation.

6.2.1.4 *The capacity for relationships*

336. Having understood that a serene interpersonal relationship is fundamental for a Salesian vocation, the prenovice seeks to develop *good relations* with his own companions and with those responsible for formation in his community, with the lay members of the educative community and with other persons whom he encounters in his pastoral experiences. He is able to accept and to listen; he is well-mannered and cheerful; he treats everyone with kindness, friendship and great openness.

⁹ Cf. R 90.

¹⁰ PI 43.

The prenovitiate offers him an experience of life in community together with other prenovices and with the confreres. He takes an active part in it and personally contributes towards creating an environment laden with important values for formation. In it he grows in his self-expression, in his capacity for communication, in shared responsibility for realizing the decisions taken, and in the sense of working together.

Games and sports too are a help to grow in his ability to relate to others, in addition to fostering his health and furthering his educative work among the young. A serious application to music and the regular practice of a musical instrument, stage performances and an interest in the ways in which youth express themselves are further means of developing the prenovice's relational and apostolic abilities.

6.2.1.5 *A sense of responsibility*

337. The prenovice is *faithful to his daily duties* and learns to work with single-minded dedication. He loves work, studies assiduously, and performs the community chores in a spirit of availability, sacrifice and constancy, considering them practical opportunities for him to express his love for his vocation. He learns to utilize his time well, make a responsible use of the mass media and personal media, turn to account the qualities he has received from God, and make motivated decisions every day that lead him towards a gratuitous gift of himself.

6.2.1.6 *An upright conscience and openness to situations*

338. *The prenovice forms himself to be authentic and upright in his conscience*; he fosters the habit of discovering the Spirit at work in creation and in the events of human history; he strengthens his moral convictions and develops an intelligent and critical attitude towards the cultural models that society proposes.

He is open to the social and cultural realities of his milieu and of the world of social communication; he is *especially sensitive to the problems of poor and marginalized youth* and to situations of poverty, injustice and rejection; he feels challenged by the cultures and needs of peoples not yet evangelized. He grows in a sense of compassion and solidarity, and shows it in his simple life. He turns these experiences into concrete opportunities for maturing in the realism of life.

6.2.2 **Spiritual formation**

339. From the very beginning of the process of initial formation, the Christian life must lead to a *lively experience of faith and a deep relationship with the Lord Jesus*; such a relationship is a necessary condition for the choice of any vocation. Without a motivated and convinced personal experience of the Christian life, a vocation to consecrated life is not possible. The current weakness of the faith-experience in young people and families calls for a proper catechumenal programme which offers a sound basis for the Christian life, and therefore for the choice of the consecrated life.

Called to embrace a life radically centred on the person of Christ, the prenovice is guided *to live in a personal relationship with him and to give a solid foundation to his Christian life*, concentrating on some of its typical aspects and experiences as accentuated by Salesian Youth Spirituality. He therefore pays attention to the following:

— *a solid catechesis* which includes the foundations of a biblical, spiritual and liturgical

formation; such a formation is necessary to deepen his faith and to discover the person of Jesus Christ, the mission of the Church, and the divine plan of salvation; it also embraces the formation of conscience by imparting a deeper knowledge of the principles of Christian moral living;

— *an initiation to sacramental life and Marian devotion*: he assumes an attitude of listening and responding to the Word of God, nourishes himself at the table of the Eucharist, and regularly approaches the sacrament of Reconciliation; he discovers the maternal presence of Mary in his life and in the story of his vocation, he entrusts himself to her and invokes her through the Rosary; he also fosters growth in his Salesian vocation through his devotion to Don Bosco;

— *an initiation to a life of prayer*: he takes part in group and community prayer, practises personal prayer and learns to share his faith experiences with others. Little by little, he acquires the ability to read the events of his life in the light of the Gospel and to listen to the inner voice of the Spirit; he is introduced to the liturgy of the hours and the “*lectio divina*” as basic elements of the life of the Christian and of the Church;

— *an introduction to the practice of spiritual accompaniment* and the talk with the Rector, both indispensable means for growing in the spiritual life.

340. As he studies the project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, the candidate comes to understand that the Salesian mission entails the vocation to community life. Therefore *he trains himself to live in community*, acquiring a sufficient capacity for interpersonal communication, accepting the others and ensuring that his activity forms part of the community plan. He pardons and rises above antipathies and prejudices. He cultivates friendship, assimilates the elements of the family spirit and contributes to it. He is solicitous and service-minded towards the others. He has an experience of Church as he involves himself more and more in his community and in the educative community, and opens himself to the wider communities of the Province, the Congregation and the Salesian Family.

341. The prenovice takes pains to learn about the Salesian consecrated life and to live a life that draws inspiration from *the demands made by the evangelical counsels*. He strives to acquire some practical attitudes such as: a simplicity that does not seek what is superfluous or comfortable, gratuitousness in relationships and motivations, detachment from affective compromises, the practice of self-mastery and fidelity to the duties entrusted to him.

6.2.3 Intellectual formation

342. The Salesian vocation and the mission to the young call for a sound intellectual preparation. Before embarking on this phase, the prenovice should have already acquired “a *general cultural foundation* which should correspond to what is usually expected of young persons who have achieved the normal education of their country”.¹¹

The intellectual formation during the prenovitiate aims at achieving, in a personalized manner, the specific objectives of the phase. Since the human and spiritual aspects are fundamental in the prenovitiate, it is necessary that, besides practical work in the form of exercises, conversations, group work and training, there be also lessons, discussions, explanations and personal study which help in bringing about the change of mentality, precisely in the human and spiritual aspects.

And so, there is need of a systematic presentation of matters concerning relationships and the process of interpersonal communication, together with aspects of self-knowledge and growth of a celibate’s emotional, affective and sexual maturity. Also needed is a consolidation of the faith,

¹¹ Ibid.

both in terms of knowledge and affections, and of Christian moral living by means of a systematic study of Christian doctrine and an initiation to the Word of God, prayer and the liturgy.

The prenovice is introduced to the mission of the Church. He learns about the different vocations in the Church, and in particular, about Salesian consecrated life and its two forms of the Salesian priest and the Salesian brother. Furthermore, he studies Don Bosco, seeing in him a model of human and Christian values; he begins to know and admire his mission which continues today in the Congregation spread all over the world; he finds encouragement for his vocation by reading and studying the figures of some great Salesians of yesterday and today.

A programme of studies and experiences in the field of social communication has also been drawn up for this phase of formation¹² for the purpose of coming to a better understanding of the cultural challenges of the present day. In addition, it is necessary to foster a serious study of music and theatrical skills in a way that can profitably continue afterwards as well. The prenovitiate must ensure that a proper method of study is acquired as well as a habit of study and reflection; also, a capacity to pursue the curriculum of studies in the following years. Where necessary, the prenovice must master the language used in the novitiate,¹³ and where possible, learn other languages.

Such an intellectual formation therefore requires a *particular and specific programme of studies*, drawn up for the precise purpose of achieving the fundamental objectives of this phase; it hardly leaves space for other onerous studies. In particular, *the philosophical studies proper of the postnovitiate ought not to be anticipated in this phase*; should, however, the circumstances of a Province require otherwise, it will be necessary to ask for the authorization of the Rector Major.

6.2.4 Formation to youth pastoral ministry

343. While enriching in different ways his knowledge and love for the Salesian mission in its many forms, the prenovice engages in experiences commensurate with his preparation and which reflect the evangelizing purpose of Salesian activity.

These are *significant educative and pastoral experiences* with a clear Salesian slant, such as presence and assistance in the midst of the young, especially those who are poorer, collaboration in animating youth groups, catechetical activities, missionary and volunteer work.

Through these experiences and with the help of a guide, the prenovice comes into contact with the Preventive System and has a taste of collaboration with lay people and other members of the Salesian Family.

For these experiences to be formative, there must be a reflection and sharing on the activity; it would be well, therefore, to organize and evaluate these activities together with the prenovice, and pay attention to the objectives and methods.

6.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

6.3.1 A formation community and an experience of community living

¹² Cf. DEPARTMENTS FOR FORMATION AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, *Guidelines for the formation of Salesians in Social Communication. Content and method for the various formation stages*, Rome 2006, 5.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*

344. Ordinarily there is *only one prenovitiate* in a Province, although there can be more than one aspirantate. It is possible, on the other hand, for two or more Provinces to collaborate in having a joint prenovitiate, especially when they have the novitiate too in common.

The prenovitiate is *preferably situated in a Salesian community* which is engaged in the apostolate; in this way the prenovice is offered the possibility of taking part in the Salesian life and mission. The prenovice has a twofold community experience: that of the group of prenovices with their formation personnel, and that of the prenovices with the entire Salesian community. Even in the case of a reduced number of prenovices, it is necessary to ensure the conditions for an effective community experience.

The prenovitiate is situated in a community *other than that of a novitiate or postnovitiate*. Instead, it can be situated in the same community as an aspirantate; in fact, such an arrangement is desirable because it facilitates the continuity between the two stages and makes a good formation team possible. When there is a considerable number of prenovices, it is also possible for the prenovitiate to form an *autonomous community*, but in this case it should have ample possibilities for Salesian apostolate, preferably animated by the same Salesian community or a community nearby.

In every case, however, the prenovitiate must offer *a real experience of a Salesian community living intensely the values of its charism*. The climate in the community must be one of openness and cordiality, leading to familiarity and confidence. At the same time, it is important that the prenovices get accustomed to a style of life that is somewhat demanding, and that the setting is simple and poor, calls for generosity, work and sacrifice, and leads one to experience a sense of joy and satisfaction with having nothing more than what is necessary. This requires that the Salesian community itself give witness of such a style of life.

6.3.2 The formation team as well as formation guidance and spiritual accompaniment

345. The key element of this phase is a *competent and systematic experience of personal and community guidance, and particularly of spiritual accompaniment*.

When the prenovitiate forms part of a Salesian apostolic community and the Rector is not in a position to closely follow up the formation of the prenovices because of his responsibilities, the Provincial expressly designates someone to be directly responsible for the prenovices. Such a person placed *in charge of the prenovices* could well be the Vice-Rector of the community. He is totally devoted to the formation of the prenovices and carries out the specific programme laid down for this phase. He is the spiritual guide of the prenovices in the same way as the master is the spiritual guide of the novices. In dialogue with his spiritual guide, the prenovice learns to open himself in confidence, draw up his personal plan of life, and embark on a journey of growth.

Experience teaches us that the one responsible for the prenovices must be *suitably prepared*, especially in developmental psychology and the dynamics of human growth as well as in the process of formation in the spiritual life. It often happens that the formation challenges in this phase are greater than those in the novitiate.

The one responsible for the prenovices collaborates with a *team of formation guides*, who may also hold posts of responsibility in the community or in the Salesian institution. It is important that among them there be *at least a Salesian Brother* in order to enable the prenovices to have a direct knowledge of the two forms of the Salesian vocation. The presentation of the two vocations to the Salesian life, already begun in the aspirantate, continues in the prenovitiate, and the decision to embrace one or other of the two forms is subsequently taken in the novitiate. There should *also be a confessor* on the team of formation personnel, and he ought to be distinct from the one responsible for the prenovices. The formation guides can “count on the cooperation of experts in the

psychological sciences. Such experts, however, cannot be part of the formation team”.¹⁴

As far as possible, the formation guides follow the prenovices, conversing with them, sharing different experiences with them as well as their rhythm of daily life, and helping them to arrive at the maturity required for taking the proper decisions. They bring the prenovices to assume an active attitude towards their formation, that is, to be open and communicative, and take responsibility for their own formation process. Precisely for this reason, it is a good thing for the formation guides and the prenovices to dialogue with each other at the beginning of the prenovitiate about the meaning of this formation phase and the contents of the “Ratio” concerning the prenovitiate, so as to bring about the free and convinced commitment of the prenovices to their own formation.

The formation guides keep in touch with each other, and work *in close collaboration with the director of novices and the one in charge of the aspirants* in order to ensure the indispensable continuity of formation. They take pains to know well the “Criteria and norms” of Salesian vocation discernment in order to be able to give a balanced assessment of the suitability of the prenovices.

6.4 DISCERNMENT AND ADMISSION TO THE NOVITIATE

346. The prenovitiate is not only a time of formation, but also of discernment.

The prenovice:

- is helped to know himself better, discern his own choice of vocation, and personalize his formation by means of a regular talk with, and spiritual accompaniment from, the Rector or the one responsible for the prenovices;
- receives guidance from his confessor in the sacrament of Reconciliation;
- knows and studies the “Criteria and norms” of Salesian vocation discernment, and takes them together with his spiritual guide as the criteria for assessing his own vocation;
- writes his autobiography through which his spiritual guide is able to help him grasp the story of his life and discern God’s guiding hand in his vocation;
- works with his spiritual guide in drawing up and verifying his personal plan of life;
- takes part in retreats and monthly recollections that can help him to deepen the motivations of his vocation;
- receives a feedback every three months by way of a personal assessment (“scrutiny”) through which the formation staff helps him to become aware of how well he is faring in his growth process and offers him suggestions about the areas in which he needs to make more effort;
- **acquires a good and practical knowledge of the two forms of the Salesian vocation.**

For their part, the *formation guides of the prenovitiate* intervene in ways that are complementary to those of the prenovice. In particular, they:

- keep in contact with the Salesians who have guided him previously;
- get to know the prenovice’s family and social environment;
- help the family to accept their son’s choice of vocation in a positive way and become involved in the maturing of his vocation, while at the same time respecting his freedom;¹⁵

¹⁴ CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood, Rome, 29 June 2008, n. 6.

¹⁵ Cf. SGC 674.

- encourage him to study the criteria for recognizing the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation.

The phase of prenovitiate formation attains its discernment objectives when:

— *the prenovice brings the search for his vocation to a close* and with the help of those responsible for formation feels confirmed in his conviction that the Lord calls him to Salesian life: he feels that he is cut out for it, is ready to embrace it and asks to be admitted to the novitiate; or, alternatively, he reaches the conclusion that he is not called to Salesian life;

— *the Salesian Congregation*, through the local and the provincial community, carries out its own process of discernment, verifies the prenovice's suitability according to the "Criteria and norms" of Salesian vocation discernment, and *arrives at a well-founded certainty* that the prenovice shows genuine signs of a Salesian vocation and has the basic requirements to begin the novitiate.

347. The admission to the novitiate is made by the Provincial on the basis of *positive signs* that indicate an aptitude of the prenovice for Salesian life:¹⁶

- sufficient health;
- a general basic culture and intellectual abilities appropriate for one to be an educator;
- a positive experience of Christian life and the apostolate;
- an attitude of commitment to his own formation;
- an ability to take decisions for genuine reasons together with a sense of duty and responsibility;
- the right intention;
- an ability to live in community, in obedience and generosity, and in a spirit of faith;
- a propensity for the simple life, initiative and hard work;
- a serene and well-balanced affectivity and an adequate development of the ability to form relationships;
- a love for Don Bosco and the Salesian mission, good relations with the young, and a preference for poor youth.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

348. *The prenovitiate should be established in a suitable or autonomous community, but different from that of a novitiate or a postnovitiate. As in the case of every other activity or work in a Province,¹⁷ the establishment or transfer of the prenovitiate phase is approved by the Rector Major with his Council, upon the request of the Provincial and the Provincial Council.*

349. *"Immediate preparation for the novitiate customarily shall last one year and shall not ordinarily be less than six months".¹⁸ It should be preceded by a serious aspirantate experience.*

350. *Ordinarily there should be only one prenovitiate in every Province; in case of necessity, the authorization to have more than one prenovitiate will be given by the Rector Major and his Council.*

351. *Admission to the prenovitiate is made by the Provincial, to whom the candidate addresses*

¹⁶ Cf. R 90.

¹⁷ C 132 § 2, C 165 § 5.

¹⁸ GC21 270; cfr. R 88.

his application. He should collect, with the help of those responsible for vocational guidance and of the candidate himself, that information and those documents that serve to reveal the signs of a true Salesian vocation and its possible counter-indications.

For admission to the prenovitiate, both the prenovice's option and suitability for Salesian consecrated life must be assessed in the light of "Criteria and norms"¹⁹ and with due attention to the degree of maturity of the individual and his possibilities of development.

The beginning of the prenovitiate should be decided in the light of the Code of Canon Law which requires for valid admission to the novitiate that the candidate shall have completed the seventeenth year of age.²⁰

352. Before or during the prenovitiate it is necessary that there be a medical check-up and a psychological examination to verify if there exists the human foundation and the required elements of suitability required by "Criteria and norms" for beginning the Salesian formation process, without prejudice to can. 220. The results of the medical check-up and the psychological examination can be communicated by the doctor and the psychologist to the Rector of the prenovitiate and to the Provincial, if, "within the framework and necessary collaboration with those responsible for the formation process" (CN 36), the prenovice consented to it in writing, prior to the medical check-up and the psychological examination. This consent must be "previous, explicit, informed and free".²¹

353. The philosophical studies proper of the postnovitiate ought not to be anticipated in this phase of the prenovitiate; should, however, the circumstances of a Province require otherwise, it will be necessary to ask for the authorization of the Rector Major.

Admission to the novitiate

354. "When the candidate considers himself ready and sufficiently prepared, he makes his application to begin the novitiate. To be admitted, he must be free from the impediments listed in canon law [CIC can. 643-645 § 1], show the aptitudes and maturity necessary for entering upon the Salesian life, and his health must be such as to enable him to observe all the Constitutions of the Society."²²

The assessment of suitability is to be made on the basis of the criteria and guidelines given by the Congregation in the Ratio and in "Criteria and norms", taking account of the conditions, impediments and juridical requirements therein indicated.²³

355. Admission to the novitiate is made by the Provincial with the consent of his Council, after hearing the opinion of the Rector of the community of the prenovitiate with his Council.²⁴ The Superiors can seek other information, even under secrecy, if this seems necessary to them.²⁵ The one responsible for the prenovices should have an adequate knowledge of their families, and this information is to be presented by him to the Provincial.

¹⁹ Cf. *Criteria and norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions*, Rome 2000.

²⁰ Cf. can. 643 § 1.1; 656.1; R 90.

²¹ CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, Rome, 29 June 2008, n. 12.

²² R 90.

²³ Cf. *Criteria and norms for Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions*, n. 114- 116.

²⁴ C 108.

²⁵ Cf. can. 645 § 4.

356. *For the eventual acceptance of candidates who have freely withdrawn or been sent away from a seminary or another religious Institute,²⁶ there is an obligation to ask for adequate information in advance and in writing. In particular, besides the documents mentioned in can. 241 § 2,²⁷ one must ask “under grave obligation”²⁸ also for a “declaration of the respective superior, above all regarding the reason for the dismissal or departure”.²⁹*

On our part, we have an obligation to furnish similar information to other Institutes or seminaries. Such information must respect the confidentiality of the internal forum, the right of persons to their good name, and the safeguarding of their privacy,³⁰ but at the same time, for the good of the persons concerned and for the good of the Church, it must not hide or dissemble the true state of things.

²⁶ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *L'ammissione al seminario di candidati provenienti da altri seminari o famiglie religiose*, Rome 1996.

²⁷ The reference here is to the certificates of baptism and confirmation, and the other documents required according to the dispositions of the Programme of Priestly Formation and according to can. 241 § 2.

²⁸ Cf. RFIS 39.

²⁹ Can. 241 § 3.

³⁰ Cf. can. 220.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE NOVITIATE

7.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

357. The novitiate is the *beginning of the Salesian religious experience* in following Christ.¹

Its purpose is “to give the novices a greater understanding of their divine vocation, and of their vocation to that Institute. During the novitiate the novices are to experience the manner of life of the Institute and form their minds and hearts in its spirit. At the same time their resolution and suitability are to be tested.”²

In this phase, with the help of the director of novices and the community, the novice:

- *learns to live the Salesian apostolic consecrated life* more directly as a religious experience: he deepens the motivations for his choice, acquires a faith mentality and assimilates Salesian values;

- *verifies his suitability for Salesian life* in a way that enables himself and his community to arrive at a moral certainty based on positive motives;

- *constantly directs his life towards the gift of himself* to God in the service of the young in the spirit of Don Bosco, and strives for the grace of unity which links together contemplation and apostolic action;

- *prepares to give himself completely to God knowingly and freely in his first profession*, and enters a lifelong formation process.

7.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

358. The formation offered in the novitiate progressively combines knowledge with practice and the community programme with personal guidance. In this way the *contents that are communicated become “experience”* and are assimilated in a personalized way, and the novice gradually develops his Salesian identity.

The *formation programme of the novitiate covers the different aspects* of Salesian formation, but pays particular attention to the spiritual aspect and to understanding the charism.

7.2.1 Human formation

359. The novice *deepens the knowledge and acceptance he has of himself*, grows in self-control and temperance, strengthens his ability to make motivated decisions and develops a readiness for work.

¹ Cfr. C 110. See the celebration proposed for the beginning of the novitiate in the Rite of Religious Profession, Society of St. Francis de Sales, Rome 1990, chapter I, “Admission to Religious Life”.

² Can. 646.

He *takes an active part in the life of his community*, refining his capacity for adjustment and for interpersonal relations that are cordial and gratuitous.

He cultivates good manners and the ability to dialogue, to accept differences, to be optimistic, and to *put his talents at the service of his community*.

It is important for the director of novices and the formation team to give some “space” for the exercise of freedom and responsibility so that the novice can assess himself, his personal autonomy and capacity for collaboration and have the possibility of reflecting on the choices he makes.

7.2.2 Spiritual formation

7.2.2.1 CONFIGURATION TO CHRIST IN THE CONTEXT OF THE *DA MIHI ANIMAS*

360. This is the characteristic feature of the novitiate.

The novice is guided in his efforts to configure himself to Christ, the apostle of the Father and the Good Shepherd, whom he finds present in Don Bosco who devoted his life to the young.³ He enters a *process of following Jesus* in his obedience, poverty and chastity and grows in union with him in harmony with the Salesian charism.

Assisted by the grace of the Spirit, he seeks a true and proper identification with Christ: “Do not forget that you, in a very special way, can and must say that you not only belong to Christ but that ‘you have become Christ!’”⁴ This means that the novice fully assumes the process of conversion and evangelical transformation in his own person.

In the ascetical effort he makes the novice experiences the joy of putting Christ at the centre of his life and of sharing more and more in his sentiments. This, for him, is a task of self-transcendence, through which he finds his way to complete fulfilment in Christ.⁵

In his religious profession and in his life as a consecrated person, he gives full expression to the deeper living out of his baptism and his configuration to Christ in the context of the *da mihi animas*.

7.2.2.2 ASSIMILATION OF THE SALESIAN CHARISM AND IDENTIFICATION WITH THE FOUNDER

361. Formation aims at purifying and strengthening the initial attraction for Don Bosco and the Salesian life and making it real through a *process of assimilating the Salesian charism* as expressed in the Constitutions.

The novice is guided to a spiritual experience which consists in a particular manner of being and doing, and finds expression in typical attitudes such as: a strong inclination towards the Salesian mission among poor youth, a particular style of prayer and fraternal life in community; in a word, a distinct way of living one’s consecration.

³ Cfr. C 196.

⁴ VC 109.

⁵ Cfr. C 22.

362. *The novice studies Don Bosco's particular experience of God*, assesses the motivations that induce him to embrace Salesian consecrated life, and learns to keep a balance between striving towards the ideal and the concrete situation of his community. He makes close and serious contact with the sources of his experience of the Salesian charism.

He prepares himself to become part of the Congregation, cultivates communion with his Province and opens himself to the reality of the Salesian Family. By learning about their history and following the more important events, he grows in an awareness of the diversity of vocations in the Salesian Family and in this way increases his sense of belonging to it.

7.2.2.3 EXPERIENCE OF FRATERNAL LIFE

363. It is in the community that the novice learns the Salesian spirit, which is fundamentally a fact of living communication.⁶

He accepts his brothers in a spirit of faith⁷ and is open to communicate with them and serve them. In his daily life he finds many occasions to grow in fraternal charity, in patience and in overcoming the difficulties in his interpersonal relationships. *He develops an effective love for his community* and knows that, over and beyond the differences and defects of his brothers, it is called together by God's initiative. He takes part in it joyfully and with a real sense of family, finding in it the presence of the Lord.⁸

7.2.2.4 INITIATION TO PRAYER ENCOMPASSING HIS WHOLE LIFE

364. The novitiate offers a climate and an environment of recollection which are conducive to a dialogue with God. It also guarantees proper guidance, regular times and a knowledge of different methods of prayer. In this way it portrays itself as *a real school of initiation to prayer*.

The novice is greatly helped when the community of the novitiate has a well-organized programme of prayer, carried out with simplicity, liveliness and joy, and also when he is offered various possibilities of praying in small groups with the young and with lay people.

During the novitiate the novice is educated:

- to love *the Word of God* and listen to it;
- to understand and love the *liturgy* as the prayer of Christ and the Church, and as a path of spiritual life;
- to live the *Eucharist* as the central act of every day of his life and of that of the Salesian community, as "a daily festive celebration in a living liturgy",⁹ to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly and seriously, to discover the riches of the Liturgy of the Hours, and to pray using the psalms of the Church;
- to practise *personal prayer* and feel the need for it as a genuine breath of his soul; it is important that the novice acquire the habit of meditation as it will have to accompany him all his life;
- to walk personally in the *spiritual life*.

⁶ Cfr. R 85.

⁷ Cfr. C 50.

⁸ Cfr. C 52.

⁹ C 88.

This practice of prayer helps the novice to live in “*union with God*” and to sanctify the activities of every day. In this way he passes from a rhythm of prayer to a spirit of prayer encompassing his whole life, and he turns it into a life in the Spirit.

7.2.3 Intellectual formation

365. “Studies during the novitiate should be carried out seriously and follow a precise programme which forms part of the overall plan of studies. *They should have as their overriding objective initiation into the mystery of Christ*, so that the novice by means of contact with the Word of God may develop a deeper life of faith and loving knowledge of God. A solid theological basis for the religious life should also be presented. The Constitutions, the life of Don Bosco and our traditions should be studied.”¹⁰ Important aspects of the history of the Congregation, and an overview of the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement will also be presented.

Studies help the novice to enlighten his faith, to understand the Salesian vocation, to build his convictions, to grow towards the complete gift of himself¹¹ and to sustain his behaviour and his options. The programme of studies aims at strengthening his process of growth to spiritual maturity and has for its core the study of the Constitutions.

During the novitiate encouragement is given to the reading of spiritual authors and to *the study of languages*, especially those languages which are required by the situation of the Province and Italian. The latter remains an element for communication in the Congregation, for the knowledge of sources and the reading of documents, for contacts with Superiors and in international meetings.

7.2.4 Formation to educative pastoral ministry

366. The whole novitiate is lived within the framework of an apostolic vocation, which includes the zeal of the “*da mihi animas*”, a readiness to serve the young, and an acceptance of the mission of the Congregation. The service of the Kingdom, the witness to the Gospel, a sense of Church and missionary enthusiasm are all characteristics of the novitiate experience. It also forms part of this experience to know and reflect on the condition of youth, especially of those who are poor, on the pastoral work of the Province, on the experience and the guidelines of the Congregation, and on the frontiers of the Salesian mission and of the missions.

The sensitivity towards the needs of the world, particularly of the young, acts as a stimulus to vocation, nourishes prayer, and turns into participation. And precisely in view of the mission, the novice cultivates his gifts and develops his potentialities.

367. “In contact with social and apostolic realities of the neighbourhood”,¹² the novitiate community gives expression to its pastoral charity in the service of the Kingdom through *various educative and pastoral experiences* in which the novice has the possibility of:

- maturing as a person and knowing his gifts and qualities in view of the Salesian life and mission;
- learning the practice of the Preventive System;
- training himself to combine action and contemplation in the “grace of unity”;

¹⁰ R 91.

¹¹ Cfr. C 110.

¹² R 89.

- knowing and experiencing the world of the young, especially of the poorest.

Through these educative and pastoral activities, the novice learns to do everything out of love for Christ: he incarnates himself among those to whom he is sent, shares with lay people, and finds a joy in freely giving himself.

These experiences are marked by their simplicity and quality, by good planning and preparation, by a community approach, by the presence of a guide and by reflection on the completed activity.

7.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

7.3.1. The community and the setting

368. *The novitiate community* facilitates the osmosis of religious and Salesian values when it is “an example of life founded on faith and nourished by prayer, in which evangelical simplicity, joy, friendship and mutual respect create a climate of trust and docility”.¹³ In it the novices enjoy a natural relationship with the professed, and their formation is the result of a coordinated effort of this formation community which is able to communicate the values of the Salesian charism by its way of life.

Aware of its responsibility, the Province undertakes to supply the personnel and the means needed to realize the formative goals of the novitiate.

The organization of the novitiate is governed by a single fundamental criterion: *the setting and the structures* must be such as to provide a genuine Salesian formation and bring the novices to make their own the purpose and the contents of the novitiate.

Considering the purpose of the novitiate, it is desirable that the house be located in an area offering good scope for pastoral work.¹⁴

Useful too are all the opportunities for contacts, spiritual sharing and collaboration among religious Institutes, while respecting the pattern of community life and formation of each Institute.

7.3.2 The director of novices and those responsible for formation

369. “The director of novices is the *spiritual guide who coordinates and animates all the work of formation* of the novitiate.”¹⁵ From the beginning of his novitiate year, the novice “places himself under the guidance of the director of novices”,¹⁶ opens his heart to him with frankness and confidence, shows a strong interest in his own formation and collaborates with a sense of shared responsibility.

¹³ C 110.

¹⁴ Cfr. R 89.

¹⁵ C 112.

¹⁶ C 111.

The principal task of the director of novices, assisted by the other formation guides, is *to make the novitiate a real formative community*, one that leads each novice to a personalized and clearly Salesian formation experience and that lives according to the manner and spirit of the Preventive System, open to the reality of the Salesian Province.

Some of the means at his disposal are the conferences, the good nights, the regular friendly talk with each novice, and the meetings for programming, assessment and sharing.

370. *The director reveals himself as a man of dialogue and kindness in his contacts, and therefore as someone capable of inspiring confidence. He shows an attachment to Don Bosco and to the Congregation, apostolic zeal, and a capacity for working in a team and creating a family atmosphere.*

He encourages the formation guides to share responsibility, to give their special contribution according to their role and to take part in discernment and decision-making. He maintains contact with those who are responsible for the prenovitiate and the postnovitiate.

He adapts himself to the condition of each novice, doing all he can to learn about his background, the education received in his family and his experience of life prior to joining the novitiate. He leaves sufficient space for the novices to be spontaneous and is capable of carrying out an in-depth discernment.

7.4 DISCERNMENT AND ADMISSION TO FIRST PROFESSION

7.4.1 Time of discernment

371. *The novitiate year is a time of intense vocation discernment carried out in an atmosphere of faith, sincere openness and systematic guidance.*

As he gradually gains experience of Salesian consecrated life, the novice assesses his situation before God: the place that Jesus occupies in his life, his assimilation of the values of his vocation, his motivations, and the progress he has made in his formation and, with the guidance of his director and the help of his community, he reaches a degree of serenity and clarity about God's will in his regard.

Important moments of this process are also the periodic assessments and above all the final discernment which directly involves the novice himself. They are moments in which the novice examines himself in relation to his everyday experience on the one hand, and in the light of his Salesian identity and the requirements and motivations to live it on the other.

There is a special moment during the novitiate when every novice is helped by the novice director to undertake a discernment concerning both forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation, and before making his request to be admitted to profession comes to a specific option for the future as a Salesian Brother or a Salesian priest/permanent deacon. In particular it is a discernment regarding whether in addition to the other criteria, in educative pastoral work with the young the novice has a greater propensity for "the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God's Kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working

life”¹⁷ or for the “ministry, which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments”¹⁸.

7.4.2 Temporary profession

372. The novice is admitted to first profession by the Provincial with the consent of his Council, after hearing the opinion of the Rector of the community with his Council.¹⁹

Religious profession is a public confirmation of the beginning of a covenant which God, the Church and the community establish with the newly-consecrated person.

It is *God who consecrates* and the novice responds by giving himself totally to God in the Salesian life. The community considers him capable of living this vocation and accepts him as a brother.

The Church, in her experience, has established a period of temporary profession during which the religious grows in maturity and assesses his concrete abilities in the light of his lived experience of the charism; in this way he can arrive at a free, responsible and definitive choice.

Submitting to the Church’s dispositions with all his heart, the candidate makes his temporary profession but with the intention of offering himself completely for all his life, because he knows that

“one does not give one’s life to Christ on a ‘trial’ basis”.²⁰

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

373. “To be valid, a novitiate must take place in **a house which is duly designated for this purpose**.”²¹ It belongs to the Rector Major with the consent of his Council to erect or suppress a novitiate house, and to approve its transfer or its establishment alongside another suitable community.²² These acts are to be done in the form of a written decree, as prescribed by Canon Law.

374. “The house of novitiate should be **in contact with social and apostolic realities** of the neighbourhood. If circumstances make it desirable, the novitiate may be established alongside another suitable community.”²³ The contact with the neighbourhood, if done in a way that respects the formation objectives of this period, can enrich the work of formation, keep it in touch with reality and allow for the realization of the required pastoral activities.²⁴

¹⁷ C. 45.

¹⁸ C. 45.

¹⁹ Cfr. C 108.

²⁰ PI 55.

²¹ Can. 647 § 2; cfr. C 111.

²² Cfr. C 132 § 1.3; can. 647 § 1.

²³ R 89.

²⁴ Cfr. R 86; can. 652 § 5.

375. *The Provincial, in whose jurisdiction the house of novitiate lies, “can allow the group of novices to reside, **for a certain period of time, in another specified house** of the Institute”.*²⁵ *If the house chosen belongs to another Province, he must have the agreement of the other Provincial concerned. For the sake of clarification:*

- *the designation of the house is to be made by a written decree;*
- *the novices must be accompanied by the director and the formation guides;*
- *the period of time must be clearly stated in the decree;*
- *the religious house must be exclusively Salesian and canonically erected.*²⁶

376. *A candidate can make his **novitiate in another house** under the following conditions:*

- *in very special cases and by way of exception, and only by concession of the Rector Major with the consent of his Council;*
- *under the direction of a capable Salesian who takes the place of the director of novices, and is appointed by the Provincial with the consent of his Council and approved by the Rector Major in each individual case;*²⁷
- *in a Salesian house that is canonically erected.*

377. ***The director** “must be perpetually professed and is appointed by the Provincial with the consent of his Council and the approval of the Rector Major. He remains in office for three years, and may be reappointed.”*²⁸ *The Rector Major’s approval is necessary both for the first three-year period and for successive ones.*²⁹

378. *In the novitiate houses destined exclusively for the purpose it is opportune that the director be also the Rector. In other cases, the Provincial will ensure that the conditions in which the director functions – whether he be Rector or not – are the most appropriate for realizing the objectives of the novitiate.*³⁰

***The formation team** should be of the right size and calibre. There should be a variety of people and roles; in particular, every effort should be made to see that among the confreres responsible for formation, there are also Salesian brothers.*

379. *“**The novitiate lasts twelve months**; it begins when the candidate, after being admitted by the Provincial, enters the canonically erected novitiate house and places himself under the guidance of the director of novices. The novitiate is invalidated by an absence of more than three months, continuous or broken. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made good.”*³¹ *For the reckoning of time reference should be made to what is laid down in the Code of Canon Law.*³²

380. *“In special cases the Provincial **may prolong the novitiate**, but not beyond a further six months in accordance with can. 653.”*³³

381. *“At an appropriate time at the beginning of the novitiate, and again before making vows, the novices are to make a retreat.”*³⁴

²⁵ Can. 647 § 3.

²⁶ Cfr. *ibid.*

²⁷ Cfr. C 111, 165 § 3; can. 647 § 2.

²⁸ C 112; cfr. can. 651 § 1.

²⁹ Cfr. ASC 276, p. 68.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ C 111; cfr. *Elementi giuridici e prassi amministrativa nel governo dell’Ispettorato*, Rome 1987, 55-56.

³² Cfr. can. 201 § 1; 202 § 2; 203 § 1,2.

³³ R 93.

382. Let the “**pastoral experiences**” draw their inspiration from the norms given above.³⁵ Let them be carried out in a graded manner and according to the character of initiation of the novitiate; let them be prepared, followed up and suitably reviewed within the novitiate community.³⁶ The director of novices is the first one responsible for them.

383. During the novitiate the official curriculum of studies (including those of philosophy and theology) is interrupted, even though they may have formed part of a course for obtaining academic qualifications or for directly preparing for professional or apostolic work³⁷.

“**Studies during the novitiate** should be carried out seriously and follow a precise programme which forms part of the overall plan of studies. They should have as their overriding objective initiation into the mystery of Christ... A sound theological basis for the religious life should also be presented. The Constitutions, the life of Don Bosco and our traditions should be studied.”³⁸

384. Every three months, the director of novices with the Council of the community, will make a careful assessment of the maturing of each novice in his vocation. The novices themselves should be trained to make a constant discernment on their own account, so as to come to perceive God’s will and purify their own motivations.

In addition every novice is to carry out a process of discernment with the Director of Novices regarding the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation making use especially of the criteria expressed in “Criteria and norms” in numbers 84 - 87. Before the request to be admitted to profession is made, each novice clarifies his own specific vocational orientation as a future Salesian Brother or as a future Salesian priest / deacon. The vocational orientation ought to become definitive, for all, before specific formation after practical training or before perpetual profession, should this precede specific formation.³⁹

To encourage a proper discernment and to highlight the Salesian consecrated vocation, if there is the custom of giving the Salesian clerics the cassock during the novitiate, this should be transferred to the time of conclusion of the novitiate.

385. “During the novitiate the novice may freely leave the Institute.”⁴⁰

The eventual dismissal of a novice, during the novitiate or at its end, belongs to the Provincial of the Province in which the novitiate house is situated;⁴¹ if the novice belongs to another Province, the Provincial of origin should be informed prior to the dismissal.

Profession

386. Without prejudice to the personal style proper to each one, **the application** for the first profession should contain the following common elements:

- an awareness of the public act one intends to perform;
- the intention of committing oneself for the whole of one’s life;

³⁴ R 92.

³⁵ Cfr. previous n. 198-199, 202-204.

³⁶ Cfr. R 86; ASC 276, p. 73.

³⁷ Cfr. ASC 276, p. 70

³⁸ R 91.

³⁹ In “Criteria and norms” number 7 states: “it is best that the vocational choice is made clear from the first profession, and in any case, before the beginning of specific formation and perpetual profession.”

⁴⁰ R 93; can. 653 § 1.

⁴¹ Cfr. R 90; can. 653 § 1,2.

- freedom to perform the act;⁴²
- reference to having carried out one's own discernment and of having requested the opinion of the spiritual director and the confessor;
- an indication of one's orientation towards the specific vocation of Salesian priest or Salesian brother.

387. The candidate is admitted to temporary profession after he has made the necessary application and has been judged suitable.⁴³

*"The Superiors base their judgement on **positive indications of the candidate's suitability**, and keep in mind first of all the canonical requirements."*⁴⁴ The mere absence of negative or problematic elements is not enough. A clear distinction is to be made between the maturing process and the lack of aptitude for Salesian religious life. Those who do not give hope of ever being admitted to perpetual profession should not be admitted to temporary vows either.⁴⁵

388. **The conditions for the validity of temporary profession** are expressed in can. 656:

- the person making it must have completed at least the eighteenth year of age;⁴⁶
- the novitiate must be made validly;
- the admission must be granted freely;
- the profession must be expressed publicly in all freedom: because of its public nature it requires the presence of the legitimate Superior or his delegate, who receives the profession in the name of the Church in accordance with can. 1192 § 1, and of two witnesses to provide juridical proof of the profession;
- the profession must be received by the lawful Superior or his delegate.

*"All the legal dispositions with respect to the conditions for validity and for the time of the expiry of profession must be observed."*⁴⁷

389. The purpose of the **period of temporary profession** is to enable the candidate to reach the Salesian spiritual maturity required for perpetual profession. Ordinarily this period lasts six years.⁴⁸

*Taking the maturity of the person and other formation criteria into consideration, the Provincial can prolong it, but not beyond nine years.*⁴⁹

390. *"During the first three years of this period, profession may be either triennial or annual; in the next three years it will ordinarily be triennial."*⁵⁰ There is nothing to prevent its being biennial. To choose from among the various possibilities one must have motives of formation in mind, and must consider the progressive and serious nature of the commitment. The decision will depend on the application made by the novice or the temporarily professed member and by the Provincial who admits him.

⁴² Cfr. C 108.

⁴³ Cfr. R 93; can. 653 § 2.

⁴⁴ C 108; cfr. can. 657 § 1.

⁴⁵ Cfr. SGC 697b.

⁴⁶ Cfr. can. 656 § 1.

⁴⁷ PI 57; cfr. can. 655-657.

⁴⁸ Cfr. The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, p. 833-835.

⁴⁹ Cfr. C 117.

⁵⁰ C 113.

391. *Let the first profession be a modest **celebration**, without the solemnity due the perpetual profession.*⁵¹

392. *The **renewal** of the temporary profession takes place when the period of time for which the profession was made is completed.*⁵² *The precise date on which the profession lapses is the day following the one on which the profession was made.*

The renewal of profession should be celebrated “without any particular solemnity”⁵³, but this should in no way lessen the awareness of the commitment entailed.

393. *The **habit** worn by the future priests conforms to the dispositions of the particular Churches of the countries in which they live and work. The same applies also to the time from which the habit must be worn.*

*The Salesian brothers and candidates for the priesthood who have not yet received the clerical habit will adopt the simple and dignified style of dress which Don Bosco recommended.*⁵⁴

394. ***Readmission to the Congregation** of one who lawfully left the Society after completing the novitiate or after profession belongs to the Provincial with his Council. The one who is readmitted must repeat the novitiate and complete the period of temporary vows.*

According to can. 690, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council can dispense from the duty of repeating the novitiate, and at the same time give the Provincial with his Council the faculty to readmit.

*It belongs to the Rector Major to determine – in these cases – an appropriate probation prior to temporary profession, and the length of time in vows before the perpetual profession is made.*⁵⁵

*After evaluating with his Council the motives of the request for readmission, the Provincial will present the request to the Rector Major together with a detailed report of the case (the complete curriculum of the one making the request, the reasons why he did not make his profession or decided to leave after profession, the reasons why he now asks to be accepted, etc.).*⁵⁶

395. ***Absence from the religious house** (“*absentia a domo*”) is ordinarily not to be granted to confreres in initial formation and to brother confreres in the case of an eventual crisis of vocation. While continuing to live in the community, the professed member deals with his situation by having recourse to a serious discernment and to a sincere and trustful dialogue with his Provincial, his Rector and those responsible for his formation.*⁵⁷

⁵¹ Cfr. PI 56; Congregation for Divine Worship, The Order of Religious Profession, 5, note 24. For the Salesian celebration of the temporary and perpetual profession, cfr. Rite of Religious Profession, Society of St. Francis de Sales, Rome 1990.

⁵² Cfr. can. 657 § 1: *Elementi giuridici e prassi amministrativa nel governo dell’Ispettorato*, Rome 1987; ISM, App. 64.

⁵³ PI 56.

⁵⁴ Cfr. C 62.

⁵⁵ Cfr. can. 690 § 1.

⁵⁶ Cfr. *Elementi giuridici*, 70-71; ISM, app. 70-71.

⁵⁷ Cfr. Letter of the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr. G. Scrivo, to the Provincials, 20.1.1985, Prot. 85/64; cfr. *Elementi giuridici*, 91.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE POSTNOVITIATE

8.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

396. “The first profession marks the beginning of a period of consecrated life. In this period the confrere, with the help of the community and of a spiritual guide, *completes his maturing process with perpetual profession in view*, and develops the different aspects of his vocation as a lay Salesian or as a candidate for the priesthood.”¹

As the first stage of this period of temporary profession, the *postnovitiate* is “a period of religious maturing which continues the formation experience of the novitiate”; it helps the professed Salesian to avoid a sudden change in his pattern of life and a slackening in his pace of growth in his vocation. It also “serves as a preparation for the practical training phase”.²

It is a delicate and important time. The confrere lives joyfully and faithfully the commitments he assumed in his first profession, and strikes deeper roots in his Salesian identity by assimilating and deepening its various aspects.

The Constitutions lay down that he be helped to achieve “a progressive integration of faith, culture and life” through “the deepening of the life of faith and of the spirit of Don Bosco, together with an adequate philosophical, pedagogical and catechetical preparation that interacts with the prevailing culture”.³

397. In this phase *the confrere is called to mature*:

- *in his personal identity*, integrating his human growth with the following of Christ;
- *in the faith*, by progressively understanding it, especially through reflection and study;
- *in his Salesian vocation*, through an adequate pedagogical and catechetical training, both theoretical and practical, centred on Don Bosco the educator and on the Preventive System;
- *in intellectual, cultural and professional competence*, by receiving a fundamental introduction to a knowledge of man, the world and God through the philosophical sciences and the sciences of education;
- *in a progressive involvement in the Salesian mission*, by taking part in some significant apostolic experiences and coming into contact with the real situation of the young and of society.

8.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

398. The commitments assumed in religious profession become translated into a genuine living experience of the values of one’s vocation: one embraces them every day, understands them better and discovers how they all fit together in a structured manner.

¹ C 113.

² Cfr. C 114.

³ C 114.

Inspired by the unifying principle of the Salesian charism, *the various aspects of formation blend with each other in a harmonious synthesis.*

Since Salesian clerics and brothers share in the same vocation, the postnovitiate formation provides for “*curricula of equivalent level*”;⁴ this does not take away the fact that the programme of studies can be different, considering that the clerics must comply with the dispositions of the Church in view of their preparation for the priesthood.

8.2.1 Human formation

399. The postnovitiate is a time in which the confrere concerns himself in a practical way with *integrating the elements of Salesian consecrated life in his personality.*

He establishes the process of his personal maturing in the daily flow of his life in community, where he links together his sense of freedom and personal responsibility with his sense of belonging to his community and its common project. Therefore, he cultivates a serenity of spirit, is ready to perform the domestic chores, accepts everyone unconditionally, and makes his contribution to the work of animation.

In his community he is regularly faithful to his duty, applies himself to his studies, develops a sense of discipline, communication, dialogue and discussion, organizes his time well and uses the means of social communication wisely.

8.2.2 Spiritual formation

400. With the help of a frequent and systematic spiritual direction, the postnovice seeks to deepen his vocation through a lived experience, reflection and assimilation of Salesian values.

At the same time, he grows in an understanding of the different forms of the Salesian vocation and the lay vocation .

He is faithful to *a personalized and convinced practice of prayer*, and all the while deepens and assimilates the methods he learned in his novitiate. He takes an active part in the celebrations and moments of prayer of his community. He pays particular attention to the privileged times of inner renewal such as: Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter, monthly recollections and spiritual retreats.

He cultivates the presence of God in his daily life and experience, and develops a spirit of hard work and endurance through the asceticism of serious and constant intellectual work, dedicated and sacrificing manual work, the humble fulfilment of the mission with no concern for comforts, and a readiness for service in the community.

He learns to integrate his faith with his intellectual knowledge, his spirituality with his critical outlook, and sees for himself how the joyful practice of his faith and the evangelical counsels makes for the full development of his humanity.

⁴ C 106.

8.2.3 Intellectual formation

401. Within the unity of the formation process, intellectual formation *is the distinguishing characteristic of this phase*, having for its objective an intellectual and religious integration in response to the fundamental requirements of Salesian identity.

Therefore, to meet the needs of present-day culture and the Salesian mission, the postnovitiate offers a particular programme that *creates out of the philosophical disciplines and the sciences of man and of education a synthesis* open to a presentation of the faith.

In the arrangement of the studies, both with regard to their frame of reference and their contents, special care is taken of *inculturation*; consequently, particular attention is paid to the study of the writings, traditions, anthropology, and history of the people and to the discovery of their genuine cultural values such as: religiosity, a sense of God, hospitality, a zest for living and solidarity.

As a result of his intellectual development, the confrere *gains a clear mental framework that is consistent with his fundamental options* and that gives him a solid and open-ended outlook on his own life. He becomes capable of a serious encounter with culture, the world of youth, the problems of education, and the Christian viewpoint. He develops a taste for serious intellectual work, improves his method of study, and acquires an ability to reflect, objectivity in his judgements and a discerning mind.

8.2.3.1 THE STUDIES

402. According to our law, the *arrangement of the postnovitiate studies* must provide for “an adequate philosophical, pedagogical and catechetical preparation that interacts with the prevailing culture”⁵ and “an introduction to theology”.⁶ “Technical, scientific or professional training may also be commenced or continued with specific qualifications in view.”⁷

8.2.3.1.1 The philosophical sciences

403. The study of philosophy leads the Salesian to a sound and coherent knowledge of man, the world and God.⁸

It is an absolute necessity for training a discerning mind that can grapple with the theoretical and existential problems of the human person, understand present-day culture and embark on a dialogue with contemporary man with a view to effectively proclaiming the Gospel.

Therefore, considering the importance of a serious and specific approach to philosophy, it does not seem appropriate to opt for an arrangement of studies that prefers to integrate the philosophical and theological disciplines.

A great help for understanding culture is also a deeper study of the thinking in world and local literature.

⁵ C 114.

⁶ R 95.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cfr. RFIS 71.

8.2.3.1.2 The human sciences and the sciences of education

404. Closely connected with philosophy are the sciences of man and the sciences of education (cultural anthropology, psychology, pedagogy, sociology, social communication, etc.) which make it possible to have a *better understanding of man and the evolution of society*. In their specific areas of competence, they offer an indispensable contribution by way of their own characteristic viewpoints.

8.2.3.1.3 The Christian mystery and faith-education

405. The vital synthesis that this phase seeks to form has faith for its basis, and it is this faith that needs to be strengthened through a *deeper study of the Christian mystery and the way of communicating it in catechesis*.

These studies, however, are not to be identified with the institutional curriculum of theology, which is proper of the specific formation to the priesthood. They are more of an initiation geared to forming a synthesis and imparting wisdom. Allied with a positive presentation of the history of salvation, they aim at fostering an ability to teach catechism and are directly concerned with strengthening and enlightening the person's growth in his experience of the faith.

8.2.3.1.4 Salesian studies

406. In view of a more mature knowledge and assimilation of the charism, the studies during the postnovitiate show a particular interest in *Salesian pastoral work and pedagogy*, and seek to reinforce a belief in education and the value of Salesian assistance.

As a result, courses are envisaged on Don Bosco the educator, making use of the proper critical tools, and on the history of the Congregation; there is a systematic study of the Preventive System and of the main outlines of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry. The principal characteristics of the groups of the Salesian Family present in one's Province are also studied.

In addition to these studies there is a crucial need also for a reflection on the Salesian experience of the individual person, of the Province and of the Congregation.

8.2.3.2 OTHER STUDIES

407. Our Regulations say that "during the years of initial formation the studies should be so structured as to *lead to degrees and qualifications* recognized by the State, whenever that is possible."⁹

In several Provinces the programme of studies of the postnovitiate, suitably integrated and of sufficient duration, is officially recognized and gives the possibility of obtaining academic degrees which have official recognition. It is a positive step to have fidelity to the goals of formation and to the arrangement of Salesian intellectual formation combined with recognized professional training.

⁹ R 83.

However, in every case the Salesian characteristics of the studies of this phase must be safeguarded.

Making the common programme of studies of the postnovitiate overlap with a commitment to other studies calls for careful assessment and respect for the requirements of formation.

8.2.3.3 THE CURRICULUM FOR SALESIAN BROTHERS

408. The studies of the postnovitiate take into consideration the characteristics proper to the vocation of the Salesian brother.¹⁰

Because of the importance of philosophy in forming to religious life and preparing an educator of the young, the Salesian brother too studies it in the manner and to the extent that is appropriate to his specific vocation.

His programme of studies also includes a training in pedagogy, elements of pastoral formation and catechetics, and a socio-political education that is based primarily on the social teaching of the Church and geared to preparing him for a specific educational activity in the world.

It is therefore necessary that at provincial or inter-provincial level *the brothers be offered “a formation programme that is serious but also flexible and adapted to the nature of their various responsibilities as well as to their actual possibilities”*.¹¹

409. Without compromising the fundamental value of his basic philosophical, pedagogical, pastoral and social formation, so as to be able to begin or continue qualification in the professional field preferably before practical training, it is not convenient that the length of philosophical and pedagogical studies for the Brother postnovices be ordinarily more than two-three years.

Qualification in their professional field regards the skills needed to fulfil the various tasks and roles that will be entrusted to them such as for example, *the vast area of school, professional training, social communication, social work, and the different aspects of administration and management*. Everything possible must be done to ensure that the studies give the brothers a competence that puts them on a par with a lay person exercising the same profession in civil society.

8.2.4 Formation to youth pastoral ministry

410. The Salesian acquires the attitudes he needs for his vocation of educator and pastor, above all *by progressively striving to integrate faith with life, and faith with culture*.

Study, community reflection and spiritual direction are the means that enable him to interpret history and culture in a Christian way, and to understand events in the Church and in the world, issues concerning youth, the ways young people express themselves and the languages of social communication.

In this way, as he grows in his knowledge and understanding of the world of young people, he cultivates in himself an “apostolic sense” as the soul of his daily activities.

His application to study becomes an expression of his love for the young, as he needs competence and professionalism to put himself at their service.

¹⁰ Cfr. The Salesian Brother, p. 209-214.

¹¹ GC21 301.

411. He also takes part in *educative and pastoral activities* that are properly organized and evaluated, and carried out to the extent possible as a group activity in a Salesian institution, or even in experiences of missionary work. The purpose of such activities is to:

- acquire a sensitivity to the work of education and also a pastoral mentality by reflecting, making personal contacts and studying the guidelines of the Congregation;
- have a first-hand exposure to the Salesian mission by being involved in concrete experiences of educative and pastoral service within the context of the Salesian educative and pastoral plan and by participating in the educative community;
- engage in the animation of young people, and above all, in Salesian assistance;
- learn to work as part of a team by acknowledging the different roles and respecting them with a sense of shared responsibility;
- train to guidance and pastoral assessment;
- gain a deeper knowledge of, and contact with, the pastoral life of the Province.

8.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

8.3.1 The setting

412. The postnovitiate needs a *setting that is clearly supportive of formation and markedly Salesian*, one that mirrors the values and attitudes which the confreres in formation have to assimilate.

8.3.1.1 THE FORMATION COMMUNITY

The formation community of the postnovitiate receives the confrere with an open heart and introduces him to a network of fraternal relationships, permeated by respect and trust. The community must always be *homogeneous and specific*, and ordinarily distinct from the communities of confreres in other phases of formation.

It is desirable that Salesians preparing for the priesthood and Salesian brothers lead a common life in the same formation community where they see properly appreciated the two forms of the single Salesian vocation¹² and where the specific characteristics are taken care of.

413. In the postnovitiate community *the climate is conducive* to the growth of responsible freedom, and the environment and style of formation are helpful for assuming and personalizing discipline. The spirit that reigns is one of zeal and enthusiasm for the Salesian mission and is based on motivations of faith and love for Christ rather than on external factors.

The moments of prayer and community reflection lead one to consider the world with a discerning mind, to read its situation in the light of God, and to commit oneself to its transformation.

The task of building the community hinges on the participation and shared responsibility of all its members and extends to all aspects of its life and activity,.

¹² Cfr. GC21 303.

“Those in formation and their guides contribute according to their different roles to the creation of an *atmosphere of shared responsibility*, and work with the aims of formation clearly in view.”¹³

414. The formation community can have its own *study centre* - this is the case of the studentate - or it can also frequent an external study centre, be it Salesian or otherwise.

The delicate process of forging a cultural and religious synthesis in this phase demands a wise *organization or choice of a study centre* offering an apt programme for the growth of vocations. This is why *Salesian study centres* - many of them are at inter-provincial level¹⁴ - *are to be preferred* as they have as their objective a stronger emphasis on connecting philosophy and the sciences of education and integrating them with typically Salesian subjects – and all this in view of the unity of the Salesian vocation.¹⁵

Various reasons, such as the needs of a particular situation in the Church, a small number of confreres, a dearth of formation guides or other difficulties – for example, the distance of a Salesian centre – may counsel *the choice of a non-Salesian study centre*.

In such a case, there always remains the duty of ensuring the time, the programmes, the professors and the formation guides *that will take care of the essential and specific aspects* of this phase, such as, for example, the integration and completion of the studies from the Salesian point of view: the sciences of education, pedagogy, catechetics, the Salesian disciplines.

8.3.1.2 OTHER COMMUNITIES

415. Within the comprehensive framework of a Province’s formation process, those responsible for formation maintain links between the postnovitiate, the novitiate and practical training. They work together in *shared responsibility to ensure the continuity of formation*, albeit in the distinctiveness proper to each phase.

The local formation community fosters the active integration of the confreres “with the provincial community, which is itself ‘formative’”.¹⁶

And the link with the local Church and the insertion in the context of a particular culture serve to keep formation in living contact with the world and its many needs.

8.3.2 Those responsible for formation

416. Those responsible for formation are to be spiritual men; they are to be steeped in the Salesian spirit and capable of dialogue because of their competence and their acquaintance with the problems studied by their confreres.

The delicate nature and importance of this phase require *a continuous effort on the part of the Province to build a team of confreres who have a broad culture and are qualified* especially for spiritual direction, teaching, the organization of community life, pastoral work, and the animation of the liturgy and music during the moments of community prayer.

¹³ C 103.

¹⁴ Cfr. GC21 283.

¹⁵ Cfr. GC21 247.

¹⁶ GC21 245b.

It is particularly important that *on the formation team of the postnovitiate there be Salesian brothers* entrusted “not only with duties of cultural and technical formation, but above all with responsibilities of formation to the religious and Salesian life”.¹⁷

417. *The Rector continues the action of the director of novices.* With wisdom and sound judgement he animates the life and progress of the community, following up and helping the postnovices especially through personal guidance and the friendly talk, the spiritual direction of conscience and periodical conferences. He helps to keep the vocation alive in each one, to strengthen the motivations of the Salesian lay and priestly consecrated life, and to foster everyone’s participation and responsibility in the work of formation.

In addition, under the responsibility of the Provincial, he accompanies each Brother postnovice in undertaking a discernment regarding the profession in which he feels called to develop his gifts and capabilities in response to the needs of the Province, so as to be able to undertake, after the philosophical and pedagogical studies an appropriate period of “studies of a technical, scientific or professional nature,”¹⁸ in view of a professional qualification.

Those responsible for formation find in the community and personal assessment they carry out from time to time a useful means to *evaluate, stimulate and guide the formation process.*

In this phase *the professors* wield great influence. It is their task to provide a solid and convincing frame of reference, and to develop a knowledge that becomes sound judgement, a discerning mind that can read situations and an ability to form a synthesis.

It is also important to draw *on the contribution of the laity and the members of the Salesian Family* in the formation of the postnovices. This must be done in a way that ensures that their contribution is truly valuable.

8.3.3 Inter-provincial collaboration

418. Being a delicate and important phase and having characteristics of its own, the postnovitiate requires a number of conditions that cannot always be met by every single Province, either with regard to the community or with regard to the study centre.

In some situations it becomes necessary for the Provinces, especially those of the same cultural area, to *join hands in setting up inter-provincial formation and academic structures.*¹⁹

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

419. “*Immediately after the novitiate all confreres must continue their formation for at least a two-year period in formation communities.*”²⁰

¹⁷ GC21 305.

¹⁸ Cf. FSDB 409.

¹⁹ Cfr. ASC 276, p. 76.

²⁰ R 95; cfr. can. 659 § 1.

420. *Let the postnovices live together in a **homogeneous and specific community**, distinct from the communities of confreres in other phases of formation. Let them have a spiritual guide,²¹ who will ordinarily be the Rector himself.²²*

421. *It is desirable that during the postnovitiate **confreres preparing for the priesthood and brother confreres** lead a common life in the same formation community where they see properly appreciated the two forms of the single Salesian vocation.*

422. *During this phase the confreres in formation must not be entrusted with tasks that distract them and hinder the attainment of their objectives.²³*

423. *From the intellectual standpoint, the essential, specific and priority aspect of this phase lies in its **nucleus of humanistic and philosophical disciplines** which are tied in with the sciences of education in view of a training in pedagogy.*

Once this nucleus is communicated and assimilated, and the other necessary conditions for formation are ensured, “technical, scientific or professional training may also be commenced or continued with specific qualifications in view”.²⁴

424. *With the help of the Provincial Commission for formation, let the Provincial and his Council pay particular attention to planning the various elements of the **formation programme for the Salesian brother** and make them a part of the provincial formation plan.*

425. *The length of philosophical and pedagogical studies for the Salesian Brother during the postnovitiate ought to be at least two years. So as to allow a suitable time for professional qualification, in ordinary circumstances it is not convenient that he extends philosophical and pedagogical studies of the postnovitiate for more than three years.*

426. *The particular arrangement of the intellectual formation in this period and the delicate process of forming a “cultural and religious synthesis” demand a wise **choice of a study centre** offering an apt programme for the growth of vocations. Let preference be given to Salesian study centres, even at inter-provincial level, if necessary.²⁵*

Where a choice has to be made between non-Salesian study centres, preference should be given to the one that best ties in philosophy with the sciences of man, and the community should take care to meet the other required conditions.

427. *Let the studies be so structured as to lead to **degrees and qualifications recognized by the State** “whenever that is possible”²⁶ and this should be compatible with the formation requirements of the phase. In case of real incompatibility, even if it is a matter of qualifying young confreres in view of the services they will have to render during practical training, an absolute preference must be given to the requirements of formation and to the studies proper of the postnovitiate.²⁷*

²¹ Cfr. C 113.

²² Cfr. R 78.

²³ Cfr. can. 660 § 2.

²⁴ R 95.

²⁵ Cfr. GC21 283; cfr. previous n. 168, 170, 178.

²⁶ R 83.

²⁷ Cfr. GC21 440. With regard to other studies during this phase, cfr. previous n. 182-183.

CHAPTER NINE

PRACTICAL TRAINING

9.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

428. “Throughout the whole period of initial formation, importance is given not only to study but also to the pastoral activities of our mission.

“The practical training period provides opportunity for *a deeper living experience of Salesian educative and pastoral action*. During this time the young confrere gets practice in the Preventive system, particularly in Salesian assistance.

“With the support of the Rector and the community, he is able to integrate his activity and the fundamental values of his vocation.”¹

From the Salesian point of view, this is the most characteristic phase of initial formation; it has its model in Don Bosco’s lived experience with the youth of the first Oratory.

429. During practical training great importance is attached to formation-centred goals and approaches since its main concern is the formation of the confrere.

Practical training has two objectives:

- *growth in the Salesian vocation*: the confrere, exercising himself in the spirit and mission of the Preventive System, develops his aptitudes and his sense of responsibility² and seeks “to integrate his activity and the fundamental values of his vocation”;³

- *assessment of his vocational suitability* through a personal and community experience of the Salesian mission and in view of his perpetual profession.

9.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

430. Practical training accords a priority to formation to youth ministry, and this in turn stimulates and enriches the other aspects of formation, giving them new substance.

9.2.1 Human formation

Through his direct experience of the Salesian educative and pastoral mission, the confrere in practical training *matures his own personality*:

- through his interactions with his community and in his work of education (assistance) and through his sharing with the laity, he becomes more conscious of his personal attitudes, his resources and shortcomings, his difficulties and the aspects he needs to correct or improve;

¹ C 115.

² Cfr. GC21 285.

³ C 115.

- he learns to be autonomous, to take decisions and to assume responsibility;
- he experiences the joy of giving himself to others in generous work and communication, using the style of kindness that is typical of the Preventive System;
- he acquires a discipline of life, a spirit of initiative, and patience;
- he cultivates good relations with all his confreres, notwithstanding the differences of age, culture and formation; he gives them a listening ear and dialogues with them, showing them respect and appreciating their experience;
- he takes an active part in his community in a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility; he learns to reflect, plan, organize and evaluate, thus acquiring an outlook geared to overall planning; he brings to the community the specific contribution of his youthful dynamism.

9.3.2 Spiritual formation

431. It is especially in practical training that the confrere *has an experience of Salesian apostolic spirituality: he practises and strengthens his union with Jesus Christ*, whom he meets in his work and in young people.

He trains himself to become a contemplative in action by striving after the typically Salesian synthesis of activity and prayer, education and spirituality.

Drawing his pastoral love from the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd, he pays attention to the rhythm and quality of his prayer, be it communitarian or personal, and does not allow himself to be overwhelmed by his daily work.

He is faithful to his daily meditation and to the frequent celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

432. As he deepens the motivations of his mission and bears witness to his vocation among the young, *he develops the mentality of a consecrated person*.

He lives out his obedience in total availability to God's will and accepts the human instruments through which God directs his life. He is ready to carry out the mission in the concrete forms it takes in the different Salesian works, and grows all the while in his way of thinking about the common project and the complementary nature of the various roles. He loves the simple life with the sacrifices it entails; he does not look for comforts and devotes himself completely to the mission entrusted to him. His affectivity finds expression in his relationships marked by serenity and a sense of balance, prudence and asceticism, particularly his educative relationships with the young, with his lay collaborators, and with women in general.

In his relationship with Christ and in his love for the young the confrere in practical training finds strength and support, while the fraternal sharing in the community and the counselling he receives in spiritual direction are a source of enlightenment and guidance for him.

And if, in facing the situation in his community or in his pastoral work, he meets with difficulties or experiences moments of failure, he does not become discouraged or isolate himself, but feels impelled all the more to deepen the underlying motivations of his vocation.

9.2.3 Intellectual formation

433. To reflect on and during his activity is the first way in which the confrere in practical training grows intellectually.

There is no curriculum of studies for him to complete; instead, he has to develop *a permanent attitude in his educative and pastoral work with the help of the ordinary occasions for reflection and discussion* and through particular initiatives.

The confrere in practical training takes an active part in the process of reflection and planning of his Salesian community and the educative and pastoral community: in this way he acquires an educative and pastoral mentality by which he is able to analyze the situation of the world of the young or of his own context.

He also uses to best advantage the possibilities offered him by way of short programmes which are pedagogical, methodological, catechetical or specifically Salesian in nature (such as: readings, meetings, and occasions for sharing at local and provincial levels).

Other study commitments too are possible, provided they are compatible with the specific objectives of this phase.

9.2.4 Formation to youth pastoral ministry

434. When he is sent to a community, the confrere in practical training *embraces its mission and the specific plan of the institution*; he inserts himself in it according to the role and the tasks assigned him.

He learns to work with others as a member of the community, taking an overall view of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry in tune with the plan of his Province.

In the various settings in which he finds himself, he matures his capacity for assistance, animation and education, and engages in teaching and communication.

435. Moved by a predilection for the young, and especially for the poorest among them, *he feels happy when he can be among them and animate them individually and as a group*. He strives to create a climate of joy, spontaneity and friendship, joining firmness with kindness. Being close to the rising generations, he is able to stir their enthusiasm⁴ and enjoys the experience of giving witness to them of his consecrated vocation.

Keeping always before him the fact of his being a cleric or a brother, he lives the apostolic commitment in the spirit of the “*Da mihi animas*”. He seeks the integral growth of his youngsters, and to this end he gives an educative and evangelizing thrust to his presence among them. He becomes an educator to the faith⁵ in every setting: the school, the playground, the workshop.

He gives a helping hand in animating the prayer celebrations of the community and of the youngsters.

He makes the most of his contacts with the members of the Salesian Family and with the lay collaborators. He works with them as a team and in a spirit of service and animation. He grows in his sense of belonging to the Congregation and the Salesian Family. He comes to appreciate the different ways of sharing in the Salesian charism and attains a greater awareness of his own vocation as a Salesian consecrated person.

⁴ Cfr. C 46.

⁵ Cfr. C 34.

9.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

9.3.1 The community

436. It is important in the first place that the confrere be sent for his practical training to a community that is in a position to *offer him the means necessary for a proper and fruitful experience*.

The community receives him cordially, involves him in its life and mission, and feels responsible together with him for his formation during this phase.

In particular, it assures him “pastoral work proportionate to his preparation and his capabilities”⁶ within the community project. At the same time, it sees to it that his work is not limited to a single kind of activity; in this way he has a chance to become acquainted with the different facets of the Salesian mission. It also give him space to make his own decisions.

The community offers him fraternal guidance, understanding and encouragement, especially when the year of practical training coincides with the preparation for his perpetual profession.

It helps him to assess his own experiences, “to integrate his activity and the fundamental values of his vocation”,⁷ and always remains attentive to his rhythm of growth. It offers him suggestions and corrections when necessary, and through the House Council expresses its opinion, particularly at the time of quarterly assessments and eventual admissions.

9.3.2 The formation guide and the personal responsibility of those in practical training

437. Because practical training involves a change of situation for the confrere concerned, his insertion in the actual circumstances of a community and his immersion in educative and pastoral work, particular care must be taken to ensure that he is properly guided.

It is indispensable for the confrere in practical training to have *an enlightened and competent formation guide*, ordinarily offered him by the Congregation in the person of the Rector.

The one who guides is aware that the confrere in practical training is making his first experience of full insertion in the mission of the community and that the setting of the apostolic community is somewhat different - in terms of configuration, rhythm of life and type of activity - from that of the formation community whence he comes.

438. *The Rector* makes it a point to meet each confrere in practical training personally and frequently.

He regularly calls together the practical trainees of the house for a formation meeting consisting of an exchange of experiences. It is his conviction that this is an important moment of formation entrusted to his responsibility. He also makes sure that those in practical training have the possibility of taking part in community prayer and the opportunity of celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Through the friendly talk each month and spiritual direction, to which the confrere in practical training remains always open, the Rector prompts and sustains his formation endeavours, his discernment efforts and his growth to maturity in his vocation.

⁶ GC21 287.

⁷ C 115.

For his part, *the confrere in practical training* is willing to share about himself with his Rector, to reveal to him in confidence the point at which he finds himself in his formation, and to establish with him the goals to be attained and the conditions to be met.

He draws full benefit from all the opportunities for dialogue available to him in the community, and from his relationship with the Rector and the confessor. He brings his personal plan up to date, evaluating it from time to time, and achieves the kind of personal momentum and self-discipline that enables him to improve the quality of his formation and experience it as a unified whole.

9.3.3 The Provincial

439. *The Provincial is conscious of his responsibility*, first of all in choosing the community to which to send the confrere for his practical training: it must be a community that can guarantee the conditions for the formation to be imparted in this phase, and in the case of a Salesian Brother, a situation in which he can exercise the professional qualification he has acquired. He indicates to the Rector the aspects that need to be taken care of in offering guidance for formation. He makes it his concern to have personal contact with the confrere in practical training and to show solicitude in guiding him. He can also let himself be assisted by another qualified confrere in this task. He follows up, with his Council, the periodical assessment that is made of the one in practical training.

With the help of the Provincial Commission for formation, *he provides appropriate initiatives of animation and guidance* for those in practical training and of assistance to their communities, following a well thought out programme. These initiatives are occasions for a direct exchange of views among the confreres engaged in the same programme, for a sharing of experiences and reflections, and for mutual support. They help to further the individual's progress in his formation.

When one finishes his practical training, it is appropriate that there be an *overall assessment* - on the part of the Provincial and the community, and on his part as well - *of his entire experience* and of the progress he has made in his vocation.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

440. *“Practical training lasts ordinarily for two years and is carried out before perpetual profession in a community that can provide whatever is necessary for the validity of this experience.”*⁸ The adverb “ordinarily” implies that a period shorter or longer than two years is to be considered extraordinary and limited to individual cases.

The formative goal of practical training must be the first criterion in choosing a community that offers the necessary conditions for formation, and in particular, a proper guidance for which the Rector holds the primary responsibility.

441. *When possible, practical training should be carried out in groups*⁹ *in order to create the best conditions for formation.*

442. *As regards the choice and realization of educative and pastoral activities:*

⁸ R 96.

⁹ Cfr. SGC 696; GC21 285.

- attention should be paid to the confrere's abilities and to the situation of his vocation and formation;
- he should be provided with a programme of different activities, without losing sight in the first place of the requirements of his day-to-day educative and pastoral work;
- he should act with shared responsibility and under the supervision of an experienced confrere, and he should have a real opportunity for making decisions.

443. Let **the Provincial** take care to maintain personal contact with those in practical training. In this task he can seek the help of a confrere who is well experienced.

444. The **quarterly assessments** are to be carried out by the Council of the house.¹⁰ They are a help to the confrere in practical training and an expression of the Council's responsibility for his formation. The assessment concerns the practical trainee's educative and pastoral performance and his progressive growth to maturity. The result of the assessment should be put in writing, clearly and with prudence, for the sake of continuity of discernment and guidance.

At the conclusion of practical training, there should be an **overall assessment** of the whole experience carried out by the Provincial, the community and the confrere himself.

445. During practical training attention should also be given to **intellectual formation**:

- the confrere should be helped to reflect on what has happened in practice; he should be involved in the day-to-day reflection of the Salesian community and in the moments of planning, evaluation and formation of the educative and pastoral community;
- "periodic formation encounters" should be organized "at local and provincial levels";¹¹
- suggestions should be offered for studies or readings compatible with the nature of this phase;
- he may be permitted to engage in university studies or the like when such studies are compatible with the primary purpose of this phase.

¹⁰ Cfr. GC21 289.

¹¹ GC21 289.

CHAPTER TEN

SPECIFIC FORMATION

446. According to our Constitutions, “after practical training the Salesian goes on to complete his initial formation”¹ – through his specific formation.

The Salesian vocation is always a specific one and the different forms of the same vocation – the lay, the priestly and the diaconal – are a permanent frame of reference for the work of formation. In this sense, there does not exist at any moment a generic Salesian, and hence not even a generic formation.

Nevertheless there is a particular period of “specific formation”, around the time of perpetual profession, which *completes the basic formation of the Salesian educator and pastor* imparted during practical training. And it is something different from professional training.

The specific formation of Salesians called to the priesthood or diaconate follows the programme of studies laid down in the Church’s guidelines.²

Because of the concrete situation in the Congregation of permanent deacons who are very few in number, and also because their formation is similar to that of priests and depends on the norms of the Church, the formation to the diaconate will not be treated separately here.

THE SPECIFIC FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER

10.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

447. According to the Constitutions, “the specific formation of the lay Salesian offers him the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation. He receives an *adequate theological preparation appropriate to his consecrated lay status*, and completes his formation with a view to his subsequent apostolic work of education.”³

The Constitutions are expressing not just a desire but a *provision* which corresponds to the guidelines of the Church and the responsibility of the confrere and the community to see to the maturing of a vocation.⁴

448. Seen within the context of a definitive option for Salesian life, the period of specific formation is for the Salesian brother an opportune time:

- to *assess* and complete his progress in his vocation and formation;
- to *reaffirm* his own identity, which he lives in a complementary manner with priests, and also his own motivations;

¹ C 116.

² Cfr. RFIS.

³ C 116; cfr. The Salesian Brother, “The period following practical training,” p. 214-218.

⁴ Cfr. VC 65, 68.

- to *reflect*, study and qualify himself in the theological and pastoral aspects of his Christian faith and in his Salesian consecrated life;
- to *consolidate* an attitude and a pedagogy of continuing formation.

10.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

449. Given the concrete situation, and in particular the generally reduced number of confreres for this phase of formation in the individual Provinces, there are different ways of realizing it. In every case, however, *it must be a complete and communitarian experience*, lasting at least a year.

To assess, deepen and complete this formation, *some values and specific attitudes in each of the four aspects of formation* are emphasized here: they are to be kept in mind during this period.

10.2.1 Human formation

450. The brother confrere pays attention to:

- a *pattern of relationships* marked by simplicity, tact and serenity;
- *social virtues* highly esteemed by people that make him accepted by everyone, including an ability to listen and to communicate;
- an *experience of affectivity* and an ability to meet different kinds of people in his educative relationships;
- *daily contacts in the community* and his relationship with the Salesian priest in a mutual exchange of gifts;
- a *deep sensitivity to the world of work and culture*, as well as an ability to size up situations objectively and adopt a professional approach.

10.2.2 Spiritual formation

451. The Salesian brother *evaluates his experience of consecrated life* and the way he walks in the Spirit, following the basic features of Salesian spirituality.

He *shares in the pastoral love of Christ the Good Shepherd*, and in his life and activity strives to grow in his attachment to the person, the style and the spirit of Don Bosco, his Founder and model. He strengthens his attitudes and motives by means of reflection, prayer and fraternal sharing.

He *knows how to join the characteristics of his lay state with his pastoral concern*, and cultivates those aspects that enable him to guide the young in their spiritual growth.

He *develops an attitude of offering to God the whole of himself*, together with his apostolic undertakings, his daily work, and the very difficulties he encounters in life. In this way his life takes on a filial and priestly character: it becomes a liturgy, all to the glory of the Father.⁵

⁵ Cfr. C 95.

10.2.3 Intellectual formation

452. Specific formation offers the Salesian brother a sound and updated intellectual formation. It comprises “*a serious theological, Salesian and pedagogical preparation*”⁶ to help him grow in the experience of his vocation and mission, and reinforces in him the habit of joining reflection with his work. This formation is spelt out in the Provincial Formation Plan.

10.2.3.1 THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY

453. The “adequate theological preparation appropriate to his consecrated lay status”,⁷ which the Constitutions speak of, comprises *those aspects of theology that serve to strengthen and illumine his Christian faith and consecrated life* so that he can live them with joy and commitment; they enable him to carry out an effective work of evangelization and catechesis among the young - especially working youth - and in his relationship with the laity.

Care must be taken to see that, among the various topics that form part of this programme of theology, *the following contemporary themes are not omitted*: Christian morality, the theology of consecrated life, deeper insights in the Bible and liturgy, aspects of pastoral theology and catechesis, and the social teaching of the Church.

For what regards *the level of theological knowledge* the brothers should have, it must be “proportionate to the grade of culture attained in other branches of study and qualifications”.⁸

10.2.3.2 SALESIAN STUDIES

454. To “*deepen his knowledge of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation*”⁹ the Salesian brother must study, among other things, the history of the Salesian brother, his spirituality and the presentation of some significant figures in whom the Salesian heritage has been incarnated, the theoretical and practical framework of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry and Salesian pedagogy, the guidelines of the Congregation, and the features of the Salesian Family.

10.2.3.3 EDUCATION IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

455. In line with the lay aspect of his vocation, the Salesian brother must be suitably prepared, through study and reflection, to take his place in *the complex world of work, technology and the economy*, and also to deal with social and political situations.

10.2.3.4 PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

⁶ R 98.

⁷ C 116.

⁸ SGC 688.

⁹ C 116.

456. The period of specific formation is distinct from the time of professional preparation. It is not possible to undertake together specific formation and professional preparation. Professional qualification has its first opportunity during the period of temporary profession, preferably before practical training, and concludes after specific formation with a possible specialisation.

10.2.4 Formation to Youth Pastoral Ministry

457. The Salesian brother:

- *cultivates a particular sensitivity to poor youth* and remains close to the world of work and the concrete problems of life;
- *broadens his outlook on pastoral work* and Salesian Youth Spirituality, the basis of his work of education among the young;
- *pays heed to the aspects that concern the mission of the Church in the world*, the evangelization of culture and the role of lay people;
- *identifies himself ever more deeply with his mission of educator and evangelizer* of the young, along the lines of his specific vocation and in interdependence with the Salesian priest;
- *develops the ability to animate, plan and work in a team* within the educative and pastoral community, sharing with the laity and taking care of his relationship with the Salesian Family; he offers his special contribution within the animating nucleus, aware of the unique value of his apostolic consecration.

10.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

458. Though it can be organized in different ways, the specific formation of the Salesian brother cannot be limited to offering him the possibility of frequenting some courses of a theological or pastoral nature. There must be *a structured programme of formation suited* to the purpose.

To ensure a high quality for this formation experience *some practical conditions have to be guaranteed*, especially in those places where, because of a small number or for other reasons, it is not possible to offer a stable structural solution (a house, a community, a centre and study-programmes).

It is important that the following be taken care of:

- a Salesian context;
- a community environment;
- planning, animation and guidance;
- a specific programme of study and reflection;
- an assessment of one's lived Salesian experience;
- the availability of formation guides.

To ensure these conditions, *the Provinces must give a responsible and persevering collaboration* in this field - of which there are some positive experiences already.

THE SPECIFIC FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN PRIEST

10.4 NATURE AND PURPOSE

459. “The specific formation of a candidate for the priestly ministry follows the norms and directives laid down by the Church and the Congregation, and has for its scope the preparation of a priest who will be a genuinely Salesian pastor and educator.”¹⁰

The specific formation of the Salesian priest or permanent deacon aims at *preparing a Salesian who is called to realize the mission to the young through the priestly or diaconal ministry*, to live it in the Salesian community in fraternal and shared responsibility with the Salesian brother, and to exercise it in the context of the Salesian Family and against the still vaster backdrop of the Church and the world.

The identity of the Salesian priest flows from the fusion of two of his identifying features (his religious and his priestly consecration) in a single, unique experience, viz. “this means on the one hand that in him his priestly consecration is qualified and enlivened by the spirit and mission that is his by his Salesian profession, and on the other it ensures, enriches and renders fruitful the pastoral identity of his own vocation and that of the whole community”.¹¹

460. *With specifically Salesian priestly formation in mind*, the following *objectives* can be pointed out:

- *assimilating the way of thinking of Christ the Priest*, of whom the Salesian, like Don Bosco, is the witness for needy youth, and living the ministry as a spiritual experience;
- *thinking with the Church*:¹² embracing the priest’s identity as presented by the Church and in its relationship with the Christian community (the laity, other vocations,...); collaboration in realizing the mission according to the Salesian charism; working in communion with the Pope and the Bishops;
- *growing in the awareness that the priestly ministry is a specific aspect of his Salesian vocation* and is stamped by it - by its concern for youth and education, by its communitarian nature, and by the commitment to be a priest always and everywhere¹³ in the variety of activities, works and roles;
- *developing a concern proper to the Salesian spirit* for catechetics, the work for vocations and Marian devotion in the exercise of his priestly ministry;
- *maturing an attitude of spiritual and pastoral discernment* towards persons and events, with a view to guiding and directing individuals and communities;
- *acquiring a solid and up-to-date theological and pastoral formation*, closely in agreement with the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation;
- *experiencing the ministry of lector and acolyte, of deacon and priest*, within the context of the local and provincial community;
- *training himself to a pedagogy for life* that prepares him to live in an attitude of continuing formation.

¹⁰ C 116.

¹¹ VIGANO’ E., “The priest of the year 2000. A theme we have very much at heart,” in: AGC 335 (1990), p. 25.

¹² Cfr. PI 24.

¹³ Cfr. GC21 294.

10.5 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

461. Keeping the breadth of vision of the universal priesthood and the unity of the local priesthood,¹⁴ the priest's formation is *carried out within a Salesian framework and takes place gradually and progressively* through the conferring and exercise of the ministries of lector and acolyte and the conferring and exercise of the order of deacon.

In some Provinces it coincides partly with the period of preparation for perpetual profession.

Called to be, like Don Bosco, a sign and instrument of Christ the Shepherd in the service of the young, the future priest or deacon cultivates a strong and lively faith, centred on the person of Jesus Christ, head of the Church, high priest and mediator.

From Christ he learns and attains the pastoral love which is the basis of his whole life and formation, and which he conveys in the compassion and love which prompt the total dedication of himself to his mission.

He lives and manifests this love as minister of the Word and the sacraments and in the service of charity.

Under the influence of the *da mihi animas*, he looks at each person and event from a pastoral point of view, and with a sense of community commits himself "to educational and pastoral services for the purpose of rendering his charges capable of celebrating their liturgy of life by incorporating it into Christ's Eucharist".¹⁵

10.5.1 Human formation

462. Aware that the efficacy of his priestly ministry depends to a great extent on his personal maturity and good relations with others, the future priest *strives to reflect, as much as he can, the human perfection* that shines forth in Jesus Christ and that he admires in Don Bosco.

He therefore shows a great sense of responsibility, a serene and mature affectivity, balance and prudence in appraisal and judgment, sincerity of heart and respect for justice.

He fosters in himself the human qualities that attract others to him and therefore endow him with greater credibility, such as: kindness, affability, loyalty, fidelity to his word, respect for persons and openness to other people's ideas, restraint and discretion.

He develops the qualities that facilitate dialogue with others, such as: humility, kindness in his dealings, trust, a willingness to listen, empathy, understanding and charity in his conversation.

He matures a fraternal relationship of interdependence in the mission with the Salesian brother.

He learns to recognize the limits he ought to set in his pastoral relationships and in his involvement in the lives of people. He cultivates a positive, balanced and prudent pastoral interaction with women.

He grows in a deep concern for those who are very poor and those who suffer.

10.5.2 Spiritual formation

¹⁴ Cfr. MuR 36; PO 8.

¹⁵ Cfr. VIGANO' E., "The priest of the year 2000. A theme we have very much at heart," in: AGC 335 (1990), p. 38.

463. Spiritual formation is *the principal identifying element* of the call to be a mediator of the Lord's presence and action. It entails creating in oneself a unity between the interior life and the apostolate, between proclamation and witness, between the service of God and the service of the young, between liturgy and life.

At the heart of one's experience is the readiness to serve, but even prior to this is the readiness for a communion of life with Christ, progress towards holiness in the ministry.

Conscious of the fact that the priestly or diaconal ordination establishes a new and deep personal bond with Christ, configuring him to Christ the head of the Church, the candidate prepares himself for it and begins to live it, knowing that everything depends on that bond. To bind himself to Christ with sentiments of close friendship is the heart of all his preparation for ordination and of all his ministry.

The total configuration to Christ is the distinguishing feature of his spiritual life, "marked, moulded and characterized by the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church".¹⁶ Identifying himself with the same "attitude... which was also in Christ Jesus",¹⁷ he grows in his love for the Father and for mankind, and imitates Christ in the total gift of himself and in his service.

He increases his knowledge and love of Christ, meets him often in his Word and in prayer, and lives in union and friendship with him by actively taking part in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, in the Liturgy of the Hours and in the service of charity towards the brethren.

464. His configuration to Christ translates into his *identification with the Church*. He is called to be a "*man of the Church*".

He loves the Church, meditates on her in faith, and lives in communion of mind and heart with her pastors. He cultivates a pastoral and missionary zeal, and makes his personal contribution towards building up the Church. He sanctifies her through his holy life. He finds in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, to which he is solemnly bound¹⁸, nourishment for his personal prayer and a way of giving expression to his sense of the Church.

This love for the Church becomes effective in the endeavour to live his relationship with the local Church, with the bishop, the priests, the religious and the laity; he holds in esteem and contributes to building up "the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services".¹⁹

465. The natural outcome of the configuration to Christ and the identification with the Church is a *humble and disinterested service of the brethren* through his ministry.

"Formation which aims at giving oneself generously and freely... is a necessary condition for one who is called to be a manifestation and image of the Good Shepherd, who gives life".²⁰

The priest or deacon considers himself to be a "*man of charity*". He knows that the main purpose of his priestly life is not his own self-fulfilment, and not even the successful outcome of all his ventures – this he leaves to the Lord – but a spending of his life for others with all the love and sacrifice it entails, knowing full well that in this way he is working for the One who truly and solely matters.

With an undivided heart and great inner freedom, even at the cost of much personal sacrifice, the Salesian lives this attitude in the specific context of his vocation, an attitude of joyous

¹⁶ PDV 21.

¹⁷ Phil. 2,5.

¹⁸ Cfr PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter, 1972, *Ad Pascendum*, VIII

¹⁹ PDV 16.

²⁰ PDV 49.

and gratuitous service to his confreres and youngsters. In this way he develops that “constant readiness to allow oneself to be taken up, as it were ‘consumed’”²¹, by the demands of the mission.

10.5.3 Intellectual formation

466. The intellectual formation of the Salesian priest has for its goal the candidate’s acquisition of *a broad-based and solid preparation in the sacred sciences, a firm grounding in “Salesianity” and a general culture* suited to the needs of our times; in this way he becomes capable of dialogue and pastoral discernment and is in a position to proclaim the Gospel message effectively to the youth of today, tune in to their culture, and guide and build the Christian community.²²

The studies are part of his spiritual journey marked by his personal experience of God. The candidate to the priesthood goes beyond simply theoretical knowledge: he gives a firm foundation to and nourishes his own faith, attains wisdom or an understanding of the heart, and acquires the habit of reflection, study and sharing as an attitude of ongoing formation.

467. The intellectual formation in this period requires time, great dedication, love and a spirit of sacrifice. It is the fruit of an *interdisciplinary effort* and an *active methodology*.

As today’s pastoral problems are faced, especially the challenges of evangelizing cultures and inculturating the Gospel, the *high scientific standard* of the studies goes hand in hand with their *pastoral aim*.²³ This task takes its inspiration from the Church’s guidelines and requires that the reflection be intelligently and responsibly *contextualized*.

The studies must enable the future priest to communicate the faith to the young in their socio-cultural situation and illumine and guide their spiritual life. At the same time, it is a fact that *only serious study can contribute to a solid formation of the pastor of souls* as a teacher of the faith and enable him to proclaim the Gospel message efficaciously in the manner most suited to present-day culture.

10.5.3.1 THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY

468. The study of theology aims at *equipping the candidate for the priesthood with a structured understanding of the truths revealed by God in Jesus Christ and the faith-experience of the Church*.

On the one hand, theology has as its reference point the Word of God, celebrated and lived in the living Tradition of the Church: hence the study of Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the history of the Church.

On the other hand, theology is addressed to the priest who is called to believe, live and communicate the Christian faith and ethos: hence the study of dogmatic theology, moral theology, spiritual theology, canon law and pastoral theology.

Concern for the believer raises the question about the relation between faith and reason – hence the study of fundamental theology – which deals with the matter of Christian revelation and its transmission in the Church. And, it seeks to answer the problems connected with the social and

²¹ PDV 28.

²² Cfr. RFIS 59.

²³ Cfr. PDV 55.

cultural situation: hence the study of the social teaching of the Church, missiology, ecumenism, non-Christian religions²⁴ and of the various ways in which religiosity finds expression.

Not to be excluded is formation in the field of social communication which offers a theoretical framework for the theology of communication, the magisterium of the Church, ethical values and the pastoral problems connected with the cultures of young people, and gives the future priest or deacon the ability to communicate; hence homilectics, liturgical practice, pastoral studies, catechesis and the exercise of the ministry in general. Familiarity with the instruments and a contextual knowledge of the styles, codes and languages of the modern means of communication are a help to him in proclaiming the Gospel and making the message more easily understood by contemporary man.

The important thing is for all these aspects of theology to converge harmoniously in an overview of the history of salvation playing itself out in the life of the Church and in world events.²⁵

10.5.3.2 THE SALESIAN ANGLE AND SALESIAN DISCIPLINES

469. Within the context of the fundamental plan of priestly formation promulgated by the Church, the specific Salesian vocation leads to an emphasis on the mission to the young and on the other areas connected with it. This entails:

- *a Salesian sensitivity in the way themes are handled*, and their pastoral significance is underscored within the theological disciplines themselves;

- *the study of certain specifically Salesian subjects pertaining to the priesthood* or subjects that have a direct bearing on it, such as Don Bosco's priestly experience, youth pastoral ministry, catechesis (particularly of the young), Salesian spirituality, the spiritual animation of persons, groups and communities, knowledge and animation of the various vocations within the Salesian Family, a pastoral profile of the various types of Salesian works and the figure of the priest or deacon in them.

10.5.4 Formation to youth pastoral ministry

470. The specific formation of the Salesian priest to youth pastoral ministry concerns the mentality, the pastoral criteria, the attitudes, the methodology, the skills, and the stance one assumes as a Salesian priest in the pastoral situation of an ecclesial community and when faced with challenges in carrying out the mission. In particular, the formation to youth pastoral ministry during this phase aims at *training the confrere in the basic ways of exercising his ministry*, according to the specificity of his Salesian vocation – and this in continuity with the lived experience of his previous years of formation, especially practical training.

10.5.4.1 THE ASPECTS TO BE CULTIVATED

471. To be a *servant of the Word* in the context of the new evangelization and in the face of the challenges emerging from the cultural situation, the future priest or deacon:

²⁴ Cfr. PDV 54.

²⁵ Cfr. RFIS 77.

- qualifies himself, through study and meditation, to proclaim and bear witness to the Word of God, adhering closely to the mind of the Church and being always mindful of the relationship between faith and culture;
- learns the art of preaching, especially homiletics, and the art of social communication in relation to evangelization, giving particular attention to certain sectors such as: the first proclamation, formation in faith through catechesis, ecumenical dialogue and inter-religious dialogue;
- makes himself capable of guiding persons in their spiritual growth, especially in the youth field and in the realm of the Salesian Family.

472. In view of his *service in the liturgy and the sacraments*:

- he prepares himself to carry out the various liturgical functions in his capacity as priest or deacon, and in particular, to preside over the worship of the Christian community;
- he ensures that every act of worship harmonizes with all the work of evangelization and the pastoral activity of the Church and with the fundamental options of Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry;
- he becomes capable of initiating young people and the faithful to the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

473. To be able to carry out the *service of charity* proper of the priest or deacon:

- he is prepared to give the first place to the logic of service and becomes a witness to the love of Christ, the Good Shepherd, in his community, rising above selfishness and individualism;
- he is ready to assume various ways of living his priesthood or diaconate, depending on the different roles in the various settings in which the Salesian mission is realized;
- he becomes increasingly interested in joint pastoral action, following the directives of the Church and the Congregation and adhering closely to the local Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan; he learns to work in a team using the methodology of pastoral planning and to make his specific contribution to the educative and pastoral community as a priest or deacon;
- he makes himself capable of the spiritual animation of groups and youth movements, and of ecclesial communities.

10.5.4.2 THE EXERCISE OF THE MINISTRIES AND THE DIACONATE

474. On the way to the priesthood, the ministries of lector and acolyte have a *special pedagogical significance*. They help him to grow in and experience values and adopt attitudes which are characteristic of formation to youth pastoral ministry, and they foster the abilities and skills needed.

10.5.4.2.1 The ministries of lector and acolyte

It is the *lector's* role to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgical assembly and to carry out other related tasks, such as, for example, to direct the singing, to guide the participation of the faithful and to teach them how to receive the sacraments worthily.²⁶

The exercise of this ministry therefore emphasizes in a special way a love and knowledge of Sacred Scripture, and the ability to proclaim it.

²⁶ Cfr. PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter, 1972, *Ministeria quaedam*, V.

As an *acolyte*, the confrere assumes the duty of attending to the service at the altar, assisting the deacon and the priest in liturgical actions, especially in the celebration of Mass, distributing Holy Communion in certain circumstances, and exposing the Blessed Sacrament for public adoration.

The exercise of this ministry therefore stresses participation in the celebration of the Eucharist and service of the liturgy in its various aspects.

For candidates to Sacred Orders, the progressive exercise of the ministry of the Word and of the altar has a predominantly pedagogical purpose, in so far as it makes them more conscious of their vocation and helps them to be fervent in spirit and ready to serve the Lord in the faithful.²⁷

10.5.4.2.2 The diaconate

475. The diaconate too – for those whose steps are directed towards the priesthood – is pedagogically geared towards the priestly ministry. It is a time of initiation, but also one of deeper thought and synthesis. In fact, the exercise of this order fosters the *maturing of some specifically priestly aspects*, even though its duration and concrete possibilities of application are limited.

Among the areas to be given priority in the preparation for and exercise of the diaconate, the following can be mentioned:

- *the proclamation of the Word of God*: the Salesian deacon prepares himself for, and has an experience of, preaching the Word of God and educating young people to the faith;

- *liturgical animation*: he ponders the theological and pastoral contents of the Lectionary, the Missal and the Liturgy of the Hours. He sets about exercising his diaconal ministry in the liturgical field (organizing and presiding over various celebrations, seeing to the preparation of those who take part in them) both in his own community and in other pastoral activities;

- *the pastoral theology of the sacraments and the preparation for the exercise of the sacrament of Reconciliation*: the Salesian who receives the diaconate in preparation for his priestly ordination is gradually introduced to the ministry of the sacraments and already receives guidance for his future responsibility of confessor and director of souls. With the help of confreres who are experienced in the moral field and in confession, he acquires the ability to guide persons in this sacrament; he learns how to combine a sensitivity to situations, a clarity of the criteria to be applied, and a capacity to form others, and to take account of the progressive nature of personal growth. He prepares himself for the guidance, counselling and spiritual direction of persons in the non-sacramental sphere as well. All this presupposes a concern for and an ability to read human situations and to evaluate them according to the criteria of the faith.

The diaconate marks the beginning of the official duty of celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours in the name of the Church.

10.6 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

476. There is *an ideal* from which to draw inspiration for all the years of specific formation of the Salesian priest. It is the time of waiting of *the apostles in the cenacle* after the resurrection: assiduous in prayer with the Virgin Mary, they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷ Cfr. PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter, 1972, *Ad Pascendum*, Introduction.

Pastoral love and zeal for the mission in terms of an openness to pastoral service set the tone for the entire formation experience.

477. The priestly formation community is made up of confreres who have had an experience of Salesian life and are about to fully assume the tasks of the mission. It is important to get them to *assume full responsibility for their own formation* from the very beginning of this phase which is so very different from the previous one.

The *formation environment* must have the following characteristics:

- *the involvement of everyone in the work of formation*, going beyond passive or individualistic attitudes; instead, everyone acts maturely and freely on the basis of motivations, serenely accepting the role of authority and the various channels through which it is manifested;

- *serious application to study* and importance given to personal and shared reflection;

- *prayer-life organized* in a Salesian manner and of good quality, with emphasis laid on priestly spirituality, and encouragement given to an attitude and personal rhythm of prayer;

- *sense of brotherhood* through the sharing of experiences, community discernment in the light of the Word, joint efforts of conversion and fraternal correction, and sincere and sympathetic exchange of views;

- the offer and practice of *personal guidance* and *spiritual direction*;

- *a strong pastoral thrust* in a manner typical of this phase and avoiding two risks, viz. that of the life-style of the community remaining too far removed from Salesian pastoral concerns and that of its being so much involved in practical activity as not to offer the candidates sufficient time for studies, community life and prayer;

- *sense of union* with the Province, the Congregation and the Salesian Family, and close adherence to the Church and the directives of her pastors.

The admissions to the diaconate and priesthood are carried out *in all seriousness*, with concern shown for a careful process of discernment and the shared responsibility of all those taking part, starting with the candidate himself.

478. *The study centre* – be it Salesian or non-Salesian – forms part of the formation environment of this phase, as it contributes to developing a mentality, criteria and pastoral preparation, and in fact, communicates an idea of the priest and minister that influences his Salesian identity, his outlook on the mission and his spirituality.²⁸ The whole organization of the study centre ought to be consistent with the overall formation plan.

The Salesian centre – which is to be preferred – makes possible *a study arrangement which takes care of the Salesian aspect and the specific contents* deriving from it.

It is not sufficient for the formation community to ensure the Salesian aspect through its style of spiritual and fraternal life, the studies and apostolic activities; *it is necessary for it to complete the programme of “Salesian” subjects*, precisely in order to offer a solid foundation for the vocation and ministry of the future priest or deacon.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

479. *After practical training the Salesian brother and the candidate for the ministerial priesthood or the permanent diaconate complete their initial formation with the help of a specific formation.*²⁹

²⁸ Cfr. PDV 67.

²⁹ Cfr. C 116.

10.7.1 The Salesian brother

480. *It is the responsibility of the Provinces to ensure that the brother confreres receive, after their practical training, the specific formation and professional training laid down by the Constitutions and General Regulations: the specific formation in the intellectual sector consists in an adequate theological, pedagogical and Salesian preparation appropriate to his specific vocation. After specific formation there could be the possibility of further specialisation, in order to complete the professional qualification begun preferably before practical training.*³⁰.

481. *The Salesian brother's vocation is a gift from the Lord that must be taken care of and cultivated by the confrere himself and by the whole community. From this point of view, therefore, the request of a Salesian brother to embark on a formation curriculum with a view to becoming a permanent deacon or priest must be the subject of particular discernment with all the consideration and reserve called for by a change of vocation.*

In the case of a temporarily professed Salesian Brother the decision will be taken by the Provincial with his Council, according to a process he will determine.

In the case of a perpetually professed Salesian Brother the request must be addressed to the Rector Major, after it has obtained approval of the Provincial with his Council. Before the request is presented to the Rector Major, a serious and responsible process needs to be ensured within the Province:

- *the Salesian Brother making the request begins a process of discernment with a spiritual guide; should the discernment with the spiritual guide conclude with an indication for a change in the vocational option, he approaches the Provincial;*
- *the Provincial with his Council proceed to approve the request or not, considering the vocational history and the motivations which have emerged, the opinion of the Rector of the community, examining whether the confrere shows clear signs of a vocation to the Salesian diaconate or priesthood, and finally identifying the new factors that have led to this change; in the case of the approval on the part of the Provincial and his Council, the Provincial sends all the documentation to the Rector Major, with whom the final decision rests.*

10.7.2 The Salesian priest or permanent deacon

482. *The specific formation of the cleric confrere requires from each candidate a clear intention to embrace the priestly life. Therefore, at the time of his acceptance for this phase of formation, **a declaration of intent is required of him in this sense**. The way in which this declaration is made may vary: for example, it may be through a request to the Provincial to undertake the study of theology, or a request to begin the preparation for perpetual profession with a view to becoming a Salesian priest.*

483. *“The specific formation of a candidate for the priestly ministry follows **the norms and directives laid down by the Church and the Congregation**.”*³¹ *“Members who are preparing for the priesthood must receive, over a minimum period of four years, a more intense and specifically*

³⁰ Cfr. Reg. 98.

³¹ C 116.

priestly formation in formation communities.”³² During this period priority must be given to the obligations of this phase of formation; other studies or activities are permitted only if they are compatible with this objective.

484. **The theological studies must last four years.**³³ In the faculties where the three-year institutional course is followed by enrolment in a two-year course for a licentiate in the ecclesiastical sciences, the fourth year of theology is substituted by this two-year programme.³⁴

485. “There must be a serious theological and pastoral formation by means of the studies prescribed by the Church.”³⁵ These studies are “arranged and carried out according to the **specific objectives of our vocation**. In particular, Salesianity studies are provided, with explicit reference to the figure of Don Bosco, the priest.”³⁶

486. The theological studies are carried out seriously, preferably in Salesian centres.³⁷ When it proves impossible to frequent a Salesian study centre, preference should be given to that non-Salesian study centre which is in a position to contribute greatly to the formation of a priest or deacon as pastor and educator. When **choosing the centre**, the criteria previously given must be kept in mind.³⁸

487. The confreres must undertake the theological studies with the “**necessary literary as well as philosophical preparation**”.³⁹ They must be in a position to approach the sources of theological reflection (Sacred Scripture, the documents of the Magisterium, the works of the Fathers of the Church and the great theologians).

For this purpose encouragement should be given for a sufficient knowledge of Latin and, at least for those aiming at academic degrees, some of the biblical languages.⁴⁰

488. At the conclusion of the theological studies and, for the future priests ordinarily prior to their priestly ordination, there should be **an examination regarding a “synthesis” of theology or the baccalaureate**.⁴¹

489. What is required in general concerning human and spiritual qualities, concerning doctrinal, psychological, pedagogical, Salesian, and pastoral preparation, concerning an appropriate previous apostolic experience and concerning an effort to keep up-to-date, should be the norm and criterion for entrusting **a confrere with responsibility for formation** in communities of priestly and/or diaconal formation.⁴²

490. **The Rector**, in fulfilling his duty, should be aware of his particular responsibility in the formation of future priests. He should take care of the spiritual animation of the community and of

³² R 97; cfr. GC21 295, 44

³³ CEC, Theological formation of future priests, 1976; GC21 295.

³⁴ Cfr. Sapientia christiana, art. 72-74.

³⁵ GC21 295.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ R 97.

³⁸ Cfr. previous n. 178.

³⁹ CEC, The theological formation of future priests, 129.

⁴⁰ Cfr. ibid. 130.

⁴¹ Cfr. Sapientia christiana, art. 72.

⁴² Cfr. SGC 684-686.

individuals: the periodical conferences, the good nights, the monthly personal talk, the moments of discernment prior to admissions, the preparation for the ministries and ordinations, the monthly and quarterly recollections, and the annual spiritual retreats.⁴³

491. **The ministries of lector and acolyte**, which are prescribed for clerics for pedagogical reasons, are to be conferred during the specific formation of the Salesian priest.

492. In conferring the ministries and in ordaining to the diaconate and the priesthood, **the norms of the Church and of the Congregation** are to be followed. In particular:

- the conferring of the ministries of lector and acolyte to candidates for the diaconate and priesthood is an obligation from which only the Holy See can dispense;⁴⁴

- these ministries must be exercised for a suitable length of time to enable the candidate to become better and more specifically prepared for the service of the Word and the altar;⁴⁵

- the exercise of these ministries “for a suitable length of time” implies that between the conferring of the ministry of lector and that of acolyte the period established by the Holy See and by the Episcopal Conferences must be respected. Between the conferring of the ministry of acolyte and the diaconate there is an interval of at least six months.⁴⁶

- the conferring of the ministries of lector and of acolyte, without there being between them an interval of some months, is illicit and irregular, and causes the pedagogical aim of these ministries to be lost. The same may be said of too short an interval between the ministry of acolyte and the diaconate.⁴⁷

493. Concerning **the criteria and modalities of admission** to ministries and orders, reference should be made to what has been said about vocation discernment.⁴⁸ Admission to the diaconate and the priesthood should be made with particular diligence and seriousness, and be based on an assessment of the entire formation experience.

494. **Ordination to the diaconate** may take place ordinarily only after the third year of theological studies has been concluded.⁴⁹

After his diaconal ordination, without interrupting his prescribed studies, every deacon exercises his ministry in liturgical and pastoral functions which offer specific scope for it. It is important that this exercise be carried out systematically and under guidance, with proper assessments on the part of those in charge of formation.⁵⁰

The “appropriate time” referred to in can. 1032 § 2 is to be measured with respect to both the individual candidate and the characteristics of our Congregation, which already provides for a previous solid pastoral preparation.

495. The future priests must ordinarily complete four years in formation communities before ordination. This holds good also for those who, after finishing the three-year institutional course in a faculty, begin the two-year licentiate in theology. “After the fourth year of theology or the first year of studies for the licentiate, **priestly ordination** may be conferred.”⁵¹

⁴³ Cfr. C 55, 70; R 49, 79, 175.

⁴⁴ Cfr. ASC 293, 27.

⁴⁵ Cfr. PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter, 1972, *Ad Pascendum* II

⁴⁶ Cfr. can. 1035 § 2.

⁴⁷ Cfr. ASC 293, p. 28; CEC-FS, p. 16.

⁴⁸ Cfr. Criteria and norms; also previous n. 301.

⁴⁹ Cfr. AGC 312, p. 56.

⁵⁰ Cfr. AGC 312, p. 57.

⁵¹ AGC 312, p. 57.

When serious reasons counsel anticipating the priestly ordination during the final semester of the fourth year of theological studies, the decision must be taken by the Provincial with the consent of his Council, and must ensure in every case that the studies of theology are completed according to ecclesiastical norms.⁵² The same applies to an eventual anticipation of the diaconal ordination.

In a timely manner the Provincial should send information about his decisions to the Rector Major through the General Councillor for formation.

496. *If a deacon, after completing the normal formation curriculum, should ask for a longer time before seeking priestly ordination, the motives of his request should be clarified, and the objectives, the length of time envisaged and the conditions to make it a formative experience should be spelt out.*

497. *If a candidate, after **interrupting his specific formation or after not being admitted** for serious reasons to profession, the diaconate or the priesthood, should subsequently ask to continue the phase he interrupted or to be admitted, the Provincial with his Council should, before examining the request, set an appropriate period of time within which to verify whether the stipulated conditions have been fulfilled and the objectives laid down have been attained. Ordinarily, this period of time should not be less than a year.*

498. *The preparation of **permanent deacons** should, as a matter of principle, follow the directives of the local Church where they are to exercise their ministry.⁵³ They will eventually be attached to the formation communities and Salesian study centres of the place.*

499. *“A religious deacon, residing temporarily or permanently in an area where the permanent diaconate has not been established, may not perform diaconal functions without the consent of the local Ordinary.”⁵⁴*

500. *Considering the importance attached to choosing a vocation, the Salesian permanent deacon who wishes to become a priest must first obtain the approval of the Provincial with his Council and then make application to the Rector Major. These applications will be the subject of particular discernment, with all due consideration and reserve.*

⁵² Cfr. *Sapientia christiana*, art. 72-74.

⁵³ Cfr. ASC 267, p. 52.

⁵⁴ PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter, “*Sacrum diaconatus ordinem*” (1967), 34.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PREPARATION FOR PERPETUAL PROFESSION

501. The period between the first profession and the definitive incorporation in the Society is a necessary one “for both the candidate and the community, so that they may work together to discern God’s will and correspond with it”.¹ It is *a time for getting to know each other and for sharing responsibility in taking decisions*. The confrere “with the help of the community and of a spiritual guide, *completes his maturing process with perpetual profession in view*”.²

502. The temporary profession is already the grace of a covenant with God and the mystery of a consecration by him and a total offering of oneself to him.

Nevertheless, without in any way diminishing the value of the temporary profession, which is also made with the intention of offering oneself to God for the whole of one’s life, it is *the perpetual profession* with its characteristics of totality (“totally”) and perpetuity (“for ever”) that conveys on the one hand the Salesian’s fundamental and definitive option made in all freedom, and on the other hand, God’s all-embracing consecration accomplished through the ministry of the Church.

An act of such great importance which marks the entire life of the Salesian and establishes a new and permanent bond between him and the Congregation *requires a suitable period of proximate preparation*.

11.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

503. As the Constitutions say, “a member makes his perpetual profession when he has reached the level of Salesian spiritual maturity commensurate with the importance of such a step. The celebration of this act is preceded by an appropriate period of immediate preparation.”³

As a matter of fact, the expression “preparation for perpetual profession” has hitherto been interpreted in different ways and given rise to various kinds of programmes.

At times it is taken to mean the immediate preparation for the ceremony of profession, once the discernment has taken place, the application has been forwarded and the confrere admitted.

At other times it refers to the process of discernment leading up to the application, a time of assessment and synthesis of the whole of formation from the prenovitiate to the end of temporary profession.

By “*preparation for perpetual profession*” we mean the period comprising the process of discernment and verification prior to making a definitive option, including the application,

¹ C 107.

² C 113.

³ C 117.

admission, and immediate preparation for the act of profession; it is therefore not limited to preparing for the ceremony of profession after the admission has taken place.

504. This period of preparation has the following *aims*:

- *the verification of a vocation in the light of lived experience*:

The confrere goes back over the whole of his formation, evaluates the story of his vocation in the presence of God, and assesses the soundness of his motivations.

For its part, the local and the provincial community accompany him in this process, gauging his suitability for a definitive commitment to Salesian consecrated life, the strength of his motivations and the presence of the spiritual maturity required.

Discernment and admission to perpetual profession call for a particular sense of responsibility; they depend on an overall assessment of the formation experience and are based on positive elements.

A fundamental sign of the maturity required for perpetual profession is the right intention, that is, a clear and decisive will to offer oneself entirely to the Lord, to belong to him and serve him in one's neighbour, according to the Salesian vocation. More than a generous desire to serve and an inclination to work in the youth field and in education, more than an attraction to the Salesian style of life – no doubt, these are important aspects but they are not sufficient, of themselves, to support a project of consecrated life – a supernatural intention is needed, a commitment of the whole person insofar as he is illumined by faith, an offering of himself to a mission he clearly accepts as coming from God's hands through the Church. This is the most characteristic sign of a vocation and it provides a solid foundation for the other elements of suitability of a vocation;

- *the maturing of a new personal synthesis*:

The confrere becomes aware of the special nature of the perpetual profession, deepens his motivations and grows in his sense of belonging to the Congregation. He reformulates his project of life from the standpoint of the charism and its values, looking ahead with an attitude of continuing formation;

- *a definitive option motivated by and based on God's grace*:

The confrere concludes his discernment with the decision to permanently embrace Don Bosco's apostolic project as a life in the Spirit at the service of the young, following the path of holiness traced out by the Salesian Constitutions, and to live it in a particular provincial community. Conscious of the implications of the commitments he is about to assume, he bases his fidelity on God who has loved him first and made a special covenant with him. He finds support also in the assistance of his confreres and in his love for the young.⁴

There can also be those who during this period of preparation, in dialogue with their spiritual director and the Provincial, consider it better to prolong the period of temporary vows or reach the conclusion of not continuing in Salesian life.

11.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

505. The period of preparation for perpetual profession *brings to a close* the process of understanding and assimilating the vocational enterprise of Don Bosco.

It is a period of strong spiritual endeavour, of brotherly dialogue, of sincere assessment of one's situation, of awareness of the gift received and close identification with it, of reaffirmation of

⁴ Cfr. C 195.

basic motivations, and of formulation of a pedagogy of life to be able to continue to live it faithfully.

506. *The programme of the period of preparation* aims at enhancing the contents of a person's experience and adopting a method that involves him deeply. Considered as a whole, it highlights the need for a personal self-examination in the light of the Salesian project and the spirit of the Congregation. It is a time for meditating once again on the Constitutions and thereby pondering more deeply the fundamental themes of consecrated life which determine the Salesian's life. It is also a time for reflecting on the meaning of profession, on its singular and definitive character, on its ecclesial implications, and on the rite of profession.

This is the period in which *great importance is attached to the times of recollection*, a deeply personal encounter with Jesus Christ, "our living Rule", and with Don Bosco, with the help of reflection, prayer and spiritual direction.

11.3 SOME REQUIREMENTS FOR FORMATION

507. Since this preparation is one of the high points of the whole formation process, the Church requires that it be a period of particular spiritual intensity.⁵

The preparation consists at times in *a programme* lasting a year or several months, and carried out in the ordinary course of practical training or specific formation by way of suggested activities, personal and group experiences, suitable guidance given by the local community and support offered by the provincial community. The preparation can also be organized and completed by having some programmes spaced out through the year (for example, at the start of the period of preparation, in the middle of the year, and a short time before the profession), but the arrangement must be such as not to lessen the continuity and efficacy of the preparation itself.

508. *This is an experience that involves the confrere, the community and the Province.*

It is very important therefore to ensure that guidance is provided, also by *having a competent and experienced guide* follow each individual and the group.

Such a person assists each confrere in a spiritual reappraisal of his own life from the novitiate onwards; he helps him to ascertain how far he has acquired the mind of Christ, grown in his affective maturity and in his vocation, and made the values of Salesian life his very own.

Furthermore, he helps him also to gauge how ready he is to immerse himself in the paschal mystery, how clear and strong his motivations are, and how capable he is of being faithful to his total commitment.

In this matter, *the community atmosphere and the sharing and praying with one's brothers* assume considerable importance, even though it is the personal rather than the community endeavour that carries more weight.

509. This is one of the situations in which *collaboration among the various Provinces* can result in the organization of initiatives and special events and can enhance the quality of the formation experience by making it possible to have a substantial number to form a community, choose competent guides and share experiences and methods.

⁵ Cfr. PI 64.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

510. *“Perpetual profession takes place ordinarily **six years after the first profession**; if he considers it opportune the Provincial can prolong this period, but not beyond nine years.”⁶ How appropriate the extending of the temporary profession would be must depend on a prudent judgement based on sufficient and reasonable grounds.*

511. *The perpetual profession may be made at the expiry of the time of temporary profession,⁷ or up to three months earlier.⁸*

This last possibility requires that there be a just cause, to be assessed by the Provincial with his Council.

In the exceptional case of anticipating perpetual profession beyond three months, before the expiry of the six years of temporary profession, the request should be addressed to the Rector Major

512. *The preparation for perpetual profession comprises the period of verification and discernment in view of the application, the process of admission and the preparation for celebrating the act of profession; it is not limited to preparing for the ceremony, after the admission has taken place.*

In the period of preparation for perpetual profession by Salesian clerics and Salesian Brothers careful attention should be given to discernment concerning the two forms, ministerial and lay, of the Salesian vocation in view of a definitive choice. The same careful discernment should be undertaken before the start of specific formation, should this precede perpetual profession. This discernment is to be undertaken not only by the one in formation but also by the Provincial with his Council.

513. *Let the Province establish **a programme of preparation** for perpetual profession in which it spells out the manner, the contents, the duration and the persons responsible, and includes also the spiritual retreat preceding the profession.*

514. *The preparation for perpetual profession involves the responsibility of the confrere, of the Province and of the local community. It may prove useful to have part of the preparation carried out with the participation and collaboration of several Provinces.*

515. *About a year before the expiry of the period of his profession, the temporarily professed member should explicitly make known to his Provincial, in a way that is considered most appropriate, his **desire to begin preparing for his perpetual profession**.*

516. *During the preparation for perpetual profession, let particular attention be given to the liturgical aspect of religious consecration, drawing upon the various elements offered by the rite.*

*Let the liturgical **celebration** of the perpetual profession have a solemnity that clearly distinguishes it from the first profession and successive renewals. Let the elements found in the Ritual be carried out, together with the adaptations envisaged.⁹*

⁶ C 117.

⁷ Cfr. can. 657 § 1; C 117.

⁸ Cfr. can. 657 § 3.

517. “A member makes his perpetual profession when he has reached the level of Salesian spiritual maturity commensurate with the importance of such a step.”¹⁰ In his **application** he must indicate:

- full awareness of the definitive act he is about to make;
- full freedom in doing so;
- the express will to continue in the Salesian life on which he has already embarked;
- his having had a dialogue with his Rector, who has agreed to his presenting the application; - his having made a discernment and requested the opinion of his spiritual director and confessor.

518. **The admission to perpetual profession** is made on the basis of an assessment of the entire process of formation, a verification of the candidate’s motivations, and his assimilation of the Salesian vocation project.

519. “When a religious in perpetual vows asks to **pass from his own institute to our Society**, he must undergo a period of trial of at least three years’ duration in one of our communities, so that he may assimilate our spirit. At the end of this time he may make formal request for admission, and if he is accepted may make his perpetual profession in accordance with canon law.”¹¹

⁹ Cfr. *Ordo Professionis Religiosae*, 1970, Introduction 5, 14c; for the Salesian celebration of profession, cfr. *Rite of Religious Profession*, Society of St. Francis de Sales, Rome 1990.

¹⁰ C 117.

¹¹ R 94; cfr. can. 684.

CHAPTER TWELVE

ONGOING FORMATION

520. All life is a vocation, all life is formation.

Initial formation leads the Salesian to make a project of consecrated life his own; he must then transform it into a lived experience during his whole life. Ongoing formation is the grace and the commitment that lead him to live the project “in a constant search for faithfulness”.¹ It is *the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process he has lived in his initial formation*.

521. *Ongoing formation is a necessity* rooted in the Salesian himself and at the heart of his Christian and Salesian vocation. And this, for many reasons:

- *the evolving and dynamic nature of the human person* requires him to be continually ready to renew himself in all the aspects and moments of his life;

- *Christian life* is a permanent vocation, a development of the grace of baptism; it requires an ability to discern and give a faith-response to the challenges arising out of the cultural situation. The Church herself is in a state of continual renewal and encourages the same in her members;

- *the Salesian mission to the young*, which is directed to that portion of humanity that is always new and unpredictable, demands a constantly renewed creativity and dynamism: “through what they ask of us the young prevent us from getting bogged down in the past; they educate us and prompt us to find new and courageous responses”;²

- *the accelerated pace of change in the world* influences us in a disturbing way and raises questions that need adequate answers from individuals and communities (for example, the challenges of the new culture, of secularization, of evangelization);

- *the present-day expectation and universal demand for quality* in every field requires that consecrated life be able to maintain a clear witness and an efficient apostolic service;³

- *the animating role of the Salesian community* as a nucleus for leading, guiding and training for pastoral action in the new context of sharing with the laity, highlights the need for a spiritual and apostolic revitalization, a doctrinal updating together with the appropriate recognized skills.

12.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE

522. Ongoing formation is an attitude to life, a “global process of renewal”⁴ involving persons and communities in the different situations of daily life.

It *takes place primarily in “daily life”, in the very realization of the mission*: “living in the midst of the young and in constant contact with working-class surroundings, the Salesian tries to

¹ VC 70.

² GC23 90.

³ Cfr. GC21 310.

⁴ PI 68.

discern the voice of the Spirit in the events of each day, and so acquires the ability to learn from life's experiences."⁵

And *it takes place as a community experience*, as a fruit of brotherly sharing, mutual relationships and excellent communication, when apostolic zeal becomes incarnate in a common project, Christ becomes the centre of life and celebration, and the evangelical life is lived in a genuine way: and all this within the context of the Church and the Congregation.

On a wider level – the provincial, the inter-provincial and ecclesial level – ongoing formation is encouraged and supported by *organized activities and by ordinary as well as extraordinary initiatives* of spiritual and pastoral renewal and updating.

523. *The subject of ongoing formation is first of all the Salesian himself.* Nothing can take the place of his free and convinced effort. No one can follow the path of renewal in his place. "Every Salesian," our Constitutions say, "accepts responsibility for his own formation."⁶

It is *the aim of ongoing formation* to enable the Salesian to live his vocation in joy and maturity, in creative fidelity, and with a capacity for renewal, responding continually to the Lord and to the challenges of the mission. This attitude of his must turn into an ability to discern and to reflect, a constant effort to make progress in his spiritual life and live in a way that matches his experience, and a striving to qualify himself in order to carry out the mission with professional competence and animate numerous apostolic forces.

524. *The subject of ongoing formation is also the Salesian community* in so far as it is the bearer and witness in the Church of a gift of the Spirit and the educator of its members; also because it is itself in need of a continual renewal of its fidelity to Don Bosco and of discernment in the Spirit. The community is the subject of ongoing formation in its basic educative relationship with young people and the laity, with those with whom it shares its spirit and mission; it is this relationship which acts as a stimulus to renewal, including spiritual renewal, offering motivations, criteria of evaluation and suggestions for updating.⁷

For this reason the community, as subject of a spiritual and apostolic experience, lives according to a project and responds as one to the Salesian vocation.

12.2 THE FORMATION EXPERIENCE

525. Ongoing formation keeps alive "a general and integral process of *constant growth, deepening each of the aspects of formation...* based on pastoral charity and in reference to it".⁸ It employs methods suitable for adults, taking their experiences and lived situations as the starting point.

12.2.1 Human formation

526. *Ongoing formation is concerned with the growth of each confrere.* It stimulates and supports his progress towards full maturity, taking account of his situation and his limitations; it aims at

⁵ C 119.

⁶ C 99.

⁷ Cfr. GC21 311.

⁸ PDV 71.

forming him into *a balanced and adult personality*, aware of his own identity and faithful to it. It seeks to create in him an interest in his interior freedom, his affective maturity, his serenity of spirit, his love for the truth and a correspondence between his actions and his words.⁹

The mature Salesian develops the kind of *sensitivity* that gives him an openness to the human situation about him and an *ability to strike up relationships* as an adult with other adults of all ages, especially in his own community, and with young people.

He feels stimulated by the young: they need to find in him a “new” man, one who can inspire them to imitate him, one who can awaken the good that lies within them, their human resources and Gospel values. *Caring friendship, a family atmosphere, simplicity and kindness, and the advancement of each person’s dignity* become for them a truly original experience, a convincing “witness”.¹⁰

A person’s development requires that *during the various stages of his life, attention be paid* to his biological, physical and psychological aspects and that he be offered illumination and guidance, both personal and communitarian.

12.2.2 Spiritual formation

527. The Salesian cultivates his spiritual life as *an experience of God in his relationship with the young, in his faith-inspired view of events, and in discernment*. Conscious of being an instrument of God’s presence and action, he experiences the joy of proclaiming Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

He deepens his spiritual life by *sharing with his community his experience of faith* and the mission. Together with his community he lives the presence of the Spirit as “a lasting source of grace and a support for his daily efforts to grow towards the perfect love of God and men”.¹¹

He follows *the spiritual path the Church offers him and the project of consecrated life the Constitutions propose* as a practical way to holiness. He makes use of special occasions such as spiritual retreats and the extraordinary opportunities of renewal offered him.¹²

He cultivates the radical gift of himself to God and the unity of his life in him, avoiding the pitfalls of dissipation and superficiality. His filial dialogue with the Father leads him to join work with prayer and to live the *union with God* in his ordinary activities and in each and every situation.

12.2.3 Intellectual formation

528. The intellectual aspect of ongoing formation is not limited to the accumulation of knowledge or the updating of skills, aspects which are certainly necessary; it is above all a help to *advance in wisdom* in order to be able to live a deeper life of consecration and *accomplish the mission with the necessary competence* in various circumstances and situations and in different roles.

It is best seen in *the attitude and ability to combine work and reflection* in a way that makes it possible to openly and intelligently face the various situations of life and to have sound criteria of discernment that are coherent with the Christian faith, the Church’s guidelines and the Salesian charism.

⁹ Cfr. VC 71.

¹⁰ Cfr. GC23 292.

¹¹ C 25.

¹² Cfr. C 91

Care is also to be taken of *doctrinal and professional updating, a knowledge of the local cultures* where one is living and working, and *new professional and technical training*¹³ in order to be able to set about the educative and pastoral service in a suitable way, animating and guiding persons, projects and works.

Ongoing formation finds its path and *stimulus in the impetus given* by the universal and the particular Church, by the experience and the guidelines of the Congregation, especially General Chapters and the teachings of the Rector Majors, and by provincial and inter-provincial programmes and initiatives.

The updating must take the Salesian's age into consideration, since every stage of life has its own spiritual susceptibilities, pastoral concerns and intellectual pursuits which, if cultivated properly through study and reflection, sustain the confrere, enhance his experience and increase the efficacy of his apostolic life.

12.2.4 Formation to youth pastoral ministry

529. The Salesian is called to *rekindle the gift of pastoral love* he received in his religious profession, so as to be able to live out his mission of education and evangelization, including the mystical and ascetical aspects of the total gift of himself to God and to the young, and the apostolic drive of the *da mihi animas*.

In the first place, *the work of education and evangelization*, when assumed and realized as a community project, is a veritable school of formation: it is conceived, planned and evaluated together as part of a broad collaboration and sharing of responsibility in the educative and pastoral community, and lived as a spiritual and ecclesial experience.

“The web of relationships created by a lively and efficient educative and pastoral community,” writes the GC24, “becomes a setting for intense ongoing formation, touching on human, pedagogical and Salesian aspects. These relationships are a vehicle for messages, they prepare us to use new languages, they foster a more attentive listening to what the world and youth culture are saying, especially when the educative and pastoral community encourages the young to take on leadership roles.”¹⁴

Through a reciprocal giving and receiving, the Salesian acquires a renewed understanding of his Salesian identity, shares Salesian spirituality, updates his skills, and becomes capable of animating a large educational setting, guiding groups and counselling individuals.

530. *The various kinds of settings and works* in which the Salesian is called to operate, and *the different roles* which are entrusted to him need specific preparation and constant commitment to retraining; they become a requirement and an opportunity for renewal and for constantly developing new skills for the sake of the mission.

There is a permanent school of faith to be found in closely embracing the mission of the Church, in her needs, in pastoral communion with the universal and the local Church, and in the relationship with the world of youth and of education.

¹³ Cfr. PI 68.

¹⁴ GC24 55.

12.3 COPING WITH SOME SITUATIONS IN LIFE

531. The Salesian “*sees his ordinary activities as effective means of formation*, and he also makes use of any other means of formation that may be offered him.”¹⁵ “At every stage of life [he] seeks and finds a new task to fulfil, a particular way of being, of serving and of loving”.¹⁶

There are certain situations and circumstances that arise during the span of one’s life; if they are properly handled, they can turn out to be particularly useful moments for a newer understanding and manifestation of one’s vocation experience.

The stages of life can be more or less foreseen, but they are also affected by personal circumstances and social, cultural and pastoral situations that are unexpected and have an impact on a person’s entire experience.

12.3.1 The stages of life

12.3.1.1 THE FIRST YEARS OF FULL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL WORK

532. The first years of full involvement in pastoral work are especially important for the Salesian priest and brother because they offer new challenges, but they can also pose problems.

The transition from a directed and supervised life – such as that obtaining in formation communities – to full personal responsibility for one’s apostolic work generally entails a re-arrangement of one’s life, an adjustment to a new pace of life and work, and calls for a new synthesis in one’s life.

Some needs begin to be felt much more strongly, such as: self-affirmation, the quest for fruitfulness, and the impulse of personal initiative and creativity. As he confronts the existing reality of Salesian life, he begins to experience tension as well as the difference and discrepancy between what he learned and what he actually finds in daily life. He may also feel inadequate for his new roles and responsibilities.

533. *The Salesian therefore strives* to deepen his motivations and to keep a unity in his life, resisting dissipation and avoiding aloofness, seclusion and a slackening in the pace of his spiritual growth. He makes a deliberate effort to live God’s design in the new context of his life and to discover new ways of being faithful to him.

This is the stage in which the confrere reinforces his sense of community, his attitude of shared responsibility, and his readiness to share with others: he makes it a point to meet experienced confreres who can share with him and guide him with their friendship, patience and spiritual depth; he makes the most of the opportunities that can help him grow in his enthusiasm for Christ, his spiritual renewal, his keeping himself up-to-date and his reflection.

534. *The community strives to offer him* a family atmosphere, to show him confidence and provide him with ample space to carry out the mission, to help him develop his skills and continue his formation, and above all, it obtains his participation in the spiritual growth process of the community. *The Rector* is well aware of his particular responsibility of providing him fraternal solicitude and guidance.

¹⁵ C 119.

¹⁶ VC 70.

In a special way, *the Province follows up the priests and brothers who are in their first years of the apostolate*. In addition to giving them support at local level, it offers them a steady form of assistance to enable them to carry out their mission fruitfully. It organizes periodical meetings to help them continue the spiritual effort they made during their initial formation, and to afford them opportunities for sharing their experiences and reflections on community living and apostolic work.

12.3.1.2 THE YEARS OF FULL MATURITY

535. The confrere's total dedication and the discharge of his duties and responsibilities develop in him a sense of security and self-confidence. As a result of this stability, he is better prepared to offer a competent service in his field, is more serene in the exercise of authority, more capable of resolving conflicts, and more open to others, their needs and aspirations.

Nevertheless, with the passing of the years, there can be occasions when he *feels inadequate to cope with the youth situation* or to face the new cultural and pastoral situations. He can be assailed by *questions about his own experience* of community life, his affectivity, his spiritual progress, the fruitfulness of his self-giving.

He needs to be watchful so as not to fall into the danger of a life "of routine", a loss of his vitality and initial enthusiasm, an exaggerated activism or a certain "individualism, accompanied either by a fear of not being attuned to the times, or by forms of inflexibility, self-centredness or diminished enthusiasm".¹⁷

536. *The Province supports the confrere* by offering him encouragement in his spiritual life, opportunities to prepare himself for the roles entrusted to him and also meetings and initiatives to sustain him in the tasks he performs and the situations he faces.

The Regulations ask that "all Salesians in their mature years should periodically be offered the possibility of spending an appropriate period of time for their renewal".¹⁸ It can be a high point of his vocation, for example, on the occasion of a jubilee of profession or priestly ordination, *a prolonged period* during which he withdraws from ordinary life in order to "reread" it in the light of the Gospel, to examine himself in depth concerning his own project of life and to consolidate his interior life. Activism yields to an intense encounter with himself and a search for deep spirituality.

On such occasions, the Salesian redefines the Christian and Salesian convictions about his own consecrated vocation and reaffirms the motivations of his decisions. He refines the meaning of his life with greater serenity and wisdom, with clearer motivations, and with a sense of self-donation, in the pursuit of human maturity and spiritual fatherhood.¹⁹

12.3.1.3 ADVANCED AGE

537. A long life is a gift to be welcomed and put to good use, an opportunity to live in a Salesian way, according to the characteristics of apostolic consecration and the spirit which sets the tone for our whole life.²⁰ For this period of our vocation too, we have before us *for our model and encouragement our Father and Founder, Don Bosco, in his failing years and in his time of sickness*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ R 102.

¹⁹ Cfr. VC 70.

²⁰ Cfr. VECCHI J., "Old age: a period to be turned to good account", in: AGC 337 (1991), p. 46-53.

He refused to withdraw into himself but kept in contact with the young throughout his whole life, always full of ardour for the mission and for the missions, busy animating his confreres, totally surrendered to God, concerned about others, and aware of the apostolic value of patience and suffering.

The personal condition one reaches and lives in this stage of life will vary from person to person, depending on each one's health, possibility of activity, service and also involvement in the community.

538. This is the stage of life that *offers gifts to be appreciated, risks to be faced and riches to be shared*. There can appear in this period certain limitations that have to be accepted and certain not-so-positive features that have to be overcome. There are those who, after years of closely identifying themselves with a role or a professional activity, now have to reduce their commitments or give up certain jobs, and as a result feel as if shunted to the sidelines; they find it hard to accept the aging process. There are also those who, experiencing their inadequacy in certain situations, are not much inclined to change and tend to close in on themselves.

For those instead who are ready to change, this period *opens the door to new ways of expressing personal harmony, brotherhood and service*. The confrere learns to grow old gracefully, establishing a precious but different kind of presence in the community and continuing to offer it the fine values he embodies, as for example, the ability to reflect, wisdom, the contemplation of fundamental realities and other characteristics proper to this age.

539. The elderly Salesian must be helped to *accept his new situation and to incarnate in it a deep sense of his vocation*, mindful that his consecrated life still maintains its full significance in all circumstances as a radical and continual availability to do God's will. He strives to live fully inserted in the fraternal and apostolic community, and offers his resources of witness and prayer, experience, wisdom and advice. He seeks suitable spiritual and pastoral nourishment and the possibility of carrying out those forms of service and apostolate of which he is still capable.

And when he falls sick or has to suffer or depend on others even physically, or when the moment comes for him to encounter Christ, *the Salesian is helped to live his fidelity to his consecration to the very last moment* and to make of his life a total gift which opens out into a full and definitive union with his Lord.

12.3.2 Some particular circumstances

540. Not only the stages of life, which are quite predictable, but also circumstances, both seen and unforeseen, form the substance of a person's experience of his vocation and his ongoing formation. At any age in his life there can occur *particular situations or moments that require a new endorsement of the values and motivations* of his life. The critical situations can be due to external factors (a change of community or work, new assignments, lack of success, difficulties in the community) or personal factors (illness, difficulties in interpersonal relations, loss of motivation, spiritual aridity, crises of faith or identity, or vocational clarification and new spiritual inspirations etc.).²¹

The love and concern of the confreres and of the Rector are able to perceive these moments before it is too late, and to offer support in the form of greater trust and the necessary guidance.

²¹ Cfr. VC 70; regarding confreres "in difficulty" or who are "seriously compromised", cfr. ISM 390-395 and also DSM 268.

The confrere seeks, and is helped to seek, the valuable assistance of prudent persons who can enlighten him on his situation and sustain him in his efforts to discern the consequences for his vocation of what is happening in his life. The Rector and the confreres pay close attention to his situation; in a delicate and timely manner, and in ways that are most appropriate, they offer understanding, support and suitable guidance.

Such moments, if lived with a concern for one's formation, can become opportunities for renewing one's surrender to the Lord, for learning the truth about oneself and for drawing close to the Paschal mystery.

12.4 THE ANIMATION OF ONGOING FORMATION

541. Ongoing formation is an attitude and a mentality, a climate and a pedagogy of life, a process, a programme and an organized service. *It is the responsibility not only of each confrere but also of the community at its various levels* and of all those entrusted with the task of animation and formation. Many and varied are the ways in which this ongoing response is expressed in a life that is continually lived as a vocation.

12.4.1 At personal level

542. As the first one responsible for his own formation,²² the Salesian seeks to respond to the increasingly new demands of his vocation. He knows that growing in his Salesian identity, which calls for a self-examination deep down within himself, is the most fruitful way to accomplish his ongoing formation. Updating and qualification are part of that formation, but it has to reach his interior life, his mentality and the core of his being. Only in this sense does it become a profound change and renewal.

This is why, in docility to the Holy Spirit, the confrere develops his aptitudes in a constant effort of conversion and renewal. Engaging in "a formation process which will last all his life",²³ the Salesian takes advantage of *some of the practical ways in which this task can be accomplished*:

- *he cultivates "the ability to learn from life's experiences"*,²⁴ paying attention to communication, dialogue and the revision of life, especially in the community and in his interactions with the young, and keeping an open and discerning mentality,²⁵ one that is ready to listen, to accept other people's ideas and communicate his own;

- *he nurtures an attitude of pastoral discernment* in various situations,²⁶ making use of the means that daily life offers (shared mission and experience, self-examination in the light of the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation, paying attention to situations, to reading and study);

- *he takes an interest in his own spiritual progress* or project of life, observes the directives of the Constitutions faithfully, takes pains to pray well, make a good meditation and lead a proper sacramental life, makes good use of guidance and personal reflection, makes time to strike deeper roots in his life of consecration and avoid weariness and superficiality;

²² Cfr. GC21 311.

²³ C 98.

²⁴ C 119.

²⁵ Cfr. R 99.

²⁶ Cfr. VECCHI J. , "For you I study..." AGC 361 (1997) p. 30

- he makes the most of the formative aspects of his *community's* daily programme of activities and draws profit from the extraordinary opportunities for ongoing formation that are offered him; in the *educative and pastoral community* and in his contacts with the *Salesian Family* he remains open to initiatives of formation together;

- *he seeks to carry out his duties with the competence* required by the situation and by the times;²⁷ he knows that to animate, educate and guide in the present cultural and religious context means to become capable of facing problems connected with life, the relationship between faith and culture, the field of ethics and morality, spiritual and sacramental pedagogy, and the social dimension;

- *he chooses, with the help of his superiors, the area of qualification* best suited to his personal talents and the needs of the Province. He is always ready *to periodically qualify himself further*,²⁸ in doctrine as well as in his professional competence, and he takes advantage of the opportunities offered him in the form of study days, conferences, courses, pastoral meetings and other formation initiatives.

12.4.2 At local level

543. The Constitutions say that “the natural environment for vocational growth is the community which the confrere joins with trust and in which he gives his responsible collaboration. *The very life of the community, united in Christ and open to the needs of the times, is itself a factor in formation, and hence must continually move forward and be renewed.*”²⁹

Here are *some expedients* that can contribute towards truly making the community a place of ongoing formation:

- *create in the community a climate and a style of life and work* that fosters the growth of individuals and of the community:

- . the family spirit disposes one to encounter others, gives him a readiness to listen and to dialogue, creates a mentality of searching and discerning together by drawing on everyone's experience, and leads one to learn through everyday experience;
- . an atmosphere of faith and prayer strengthens the inner motivations, disposing one to live them in the radical way of the Gospel and with apostolic generosity;
- . a good arrangement of the work itself, the community and pastoral project, and the assessments encourages the Salesian to engage in a process of revising his attitudes towards religious life and his methods of work and to relaunch a quest for quality in his life and mission.

- *make use of all the moments, means and aspects that community life offers* to promote ongoing formation:

- . the moments of community prayer such as meditation, spiritual reading, the good night, the monthly and quarterly recollections; the moments of evaluation, participation and shared responsibility (including especially the community day³⁰);
- . communication with the provincial community and with the Congregation and a ready acceptance of the exhortations and guidelines that come from them;

²⁷ Cfr. C 119.

²⁸ Cfr. R 100.

²⁹ C 99.

³⁰ Cfr. GC23 222.

. information, readings, an up-to-date library;

- *establish a yearly programme of ongoing formation;*

- *ensure that formation takes place together within the educative and pastoral community* through reflection, planning and evaluation, and initiatives shared with other members of the Salesian Family;

- *offer those in need the possibility of frequenting specific moments or programmes of renewal and updating* (initiatives, experiences, courses, etc.).

544. *The Rector is the first animator of the experience of ongoing formation in his community. Suitably prepared for his role, he:*

- *fosters a climate and a pattern of internal and external relations* which enhance the daily life of the community (“common spiritual direction, conferences, good-nights and informal meetings”³¹);

- *communicates to the confreres the Salesian principles of life and work*; to this end he makes known and uses ecclesial and Salesian documents as his favoured sources, and cultivates communion with the Province and the Congregation;

- *animates the Salesian mission* by ensuring that the Assembly of the confreres and the local Council assume their responsibilities, and encouraging meetings that contribute to brotherhood, updating and relaxation;³²

- *promotes processes of relationship and formation with the Salesian Family and the educative and pastoral community*, safeguarding the Salesian charism in the Salesian educative and pastoral plan, and encouraging the Salesian community to carry out its specific role of animation; he makes intelligent use of means of animation such as Salesian news and concrete sharing experiences.³³

12.4.3 At provincial level

545. *The Province is a community that imparts, and at the same time receives, formation.*

It accomplishes the mission by concretely translating the *Da mihi animas* and the Preventive System into an experience of life and into works and activities, within a well-defined historical and geographical context.

The Province’s own project, the way it lives its Salesian identity, the criteria guiding its spiritual progress, its sharing of the Salesian mission and spirit with the Salesian Family and with the laity, and very many other aspects of its life are *the first way in which it animates ongoing formation* because in them it offers an ideal to be lived and a model from which to draw inspiration for living in a Salesian manner.

>From this point of view, a great deal depends on the kind of equilibrium the Province is able to maintain between its front-line endeavours, the qualification of its personnel, the qualitative strength of its communities and its ability to convey a message to others through its Salesian life and mission. There are some situations in which the ongoing formation of the confreres and communities will receive a boost from new enthusiasm and the launch of new apostolic ventures;

³¹ R 175.

³² Cfr. R 173.

³³ Cfr. GC24 172.

there are others instead which will require a readjustment to new situations and a concentration of energies for the sake of a better performance and service.

546. There are in every Province various occasions, opportunities, services and structures that, in different ways, constitute the animation of ongoing formation in the provincial community, in the local communities and in every confrere.

In the first place, there are the processes that involve the confreres in evaluating and redefining the Province's Salesian life, such as, for example, the Provincial Chapters and assemblies, and the formulation and revision of the Provincial Plan and the Directory.

Then, there are the meetings of Rectors, of the various provincial teams and groups of confreres.

Finally, there are all those initiatives – those which impart a capacity for discernment, prompt a renewal of methodology, guide the animators, systematically qualify the personnel, and foster a commitment to establish qualified teams and centres – all these make a significant contribution to the provincial community.

547. There are some practical requirements that affect for the better the experience of ongoing formation in the Province. Here are a few of them:

- *ensuring the proper functioning of animation and government*, especially the annual provincial visitation, the spiritual retreat, the Provincial Chapter (preparatory phase, actual event and implementation), and the activity of the Provincial Council, the Delegate and the Commission for formation;

- *planning a concerted programme of action*, which implies, in particular:

- . drawing up “an organic plan for the ongoing formation of the confreres with a view to their spiritual renewal, their pastoral qualification, and their educational and professional ability”;³⁴

- . translating the above-mentioned plan into a yearly programme of ongoing formation in the Province;

- . *formulating a plan for the qualification of personnel and committing oneself to implement it resolutely, even if it should entail an outlay of finance or personnel; paying special attention to the preparation of experts in Salesianity and committing them to serve the confreres and the communities; making sure that qualified confreres are occupied in specific tasks within the Province's plan and continue in the field of their own specialization;*

- . having a formation programme for the SDBs and laity together in which are provided: “contents, experiences and periods dedicated to formation; a definition of the role, relationships and manner of collaboration between SDBs and laity; coordination between the various sectors and structures of animation; the role and interventions of the Provincial and members of the Provincial Council in formation activities; the availability of centres, groups and structures of provincial animation”;³⁵

- *promoting meetings*:

- . of the provincial teams, in order to create convergence and prepare people for the roles they must discharge;

- . of Rectors, of those responsible for formation, of pastoral animators, of economists and of other confreres; these meetings are occasions for deepening Salesian identity in its educational and pastoral dimensions;³⁶ while they treat specific aspects, even of an

³⁴ GC23 223.

³⁵ GC24 145.

³⁶ Cfr. R 101.

administrative or organizational nature, they do show a concern for the religious life and spiritual and doctrinal advancement of the Salesians;

- *offering and organizing particular initiatives:*

. preparing ordinary and extraordinary initiatives of spiritual and pastoral formation for all the confreres according to a programme which spans several years and takes into account the progress of theological doctrine and new pastoral questions;

. seeing to it that the spiritual retreats have “particular efficacy in promoting personal growth and province-wide union, and become more effective because of the previous preparation of the confreres, the updating of the way of conducting the retreat, and the updating also of the animators”;³⁷

. *organizing a centre or a provincial team for spiritual and cultural animation, in association with a Salesian study centre or a spirituality centre, where such a centre exists;*

- *fostering collaboration with the other groups of the Salesian Family* in the field of ongoing formation, with the help of extraordinary initiatives or systematic and planned activities proposed and animated by teams comprising members of the different groups;

- *keeping an openness to the calls for renewal* and qualification emanating from the Church, the Institutes of consecrated life and the sectors close to our mission.

548. The Provincial, assisted by his Council, and with the help of the Delegate and the provincial Commission for formation strives to ensure the practical requirements referred to.

To provide for the ongoing formation of the confreres:

- he supports *their efforts*, through his personal contact, and offers them opportunities for renewal;³⁸

- drawing on the help of the provincial Commission for formation, he *organizes* with his Council a programme of activities and initiatives that encourages and supports the ongoing formation of the confreres, and in this context he assumes as his primary concern of government the *formation of the principal animators* (Rectors, those responsible for formation, Delegates);

- he follows with particular attention the day-to-day life of the *local communities*;

- he *encourages inter-provincial collaboration*.

549. *The Delegate for formation, with the help of the provincial Commission for formation, has the duty of:*

- *sensitizing the confreres and communities* to the need for ongoing formation;

- *coordinating different initiatives* so as to give continuity to the work of formation;

- *indicating contents, preparing materials and organizing appropriate services* for a renewed approach to the spiritual retreat, prayer days or prayer sessions, long renewal courses, meetings for the updating of specific categories, study sessions on documents of the Church and the Congregation; dissemination of bibliographical information;

- *drawing on the contribution* to ongoing formation of the other Delegates and animators;

- *keeping in touch* with the Delegates of other Provinces and with the one responsible for inter-provincial coordination.

³⁷ GC21 332.

³⁸ Cfr. R 102.

12.4.4 At inter-provincial level

550. Some initiatives for the animation of ongoing formation on a wider scale are:

- *different kinds of linkage between the Provinces* for sharing experiences, organizing programmes and initiatives, preparing animation materials, and supporting the work of animators;

- establishing - at the level of a Region, a linguistic grouping or Provincial conference, and according to possibility and convenience – *centres for ongoing formation*. These centres offer their services to the Provinces, the communities and individual confreres in a variety of ways, organizing, for example, courses or programmes, preparing and distributing materials for the animation of communities or arranging for the translation of Salesian texts;

- creating - at the level of a Region or Provincial conference – groups of people who are qualified in Salesian studies and able to offer their services, publishing, holding seminars and specific courses of updating for confreres in the phase of ongoing formation.

551. *The Regional Councillors* follow up the implementation of the inter-provincial programmes of ongoing formation and keep in contact with the Provincials responsible for them. To this end they foster a greater collaboration and coordination among the Provinces.

The General Councillor for formation has the care and responsibility for the integral and ongoing formation of the confreres. He encourages and supports the efforts made by the Provinces. In agreement with the respective regional Councillor, he asks them to plan and implement the practical guidelines concerning the formation of the confreres; he follows with particular care the progress of the centres of ongoing formation.

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES AND NORMS

552. *The Salesian, as the first one responsible for his formation,*³⁹ *strives to live in a continual attitude of renewal and response to his vocation. For this he adopts a suitable pedagogy to grow in his personal spiritual life, makes every day a special moment of formation, cultivates a discerning attitude and acquires the ability to learn from life's experiences;*⁴⁰ *he keeps himself up-to-date and open to the Church's exhortations and particularly to the situation of the young and the working-classes; he considers his community the natural environment for growing in his vocation and takes an active part in it; he lives his belonging to the Province and to the Congregation, and gladly accepts their suggestions and initiatives.*

553. *Every community should have a programme of ongoing formation catering for the different aspects of Salesian formation; the programme should be evaluated and renewed annually. It should give suitable importance to the community day, the monthly and quarterly recollections, the moments of planning and assessment, and the formation activities in the educative and pastoral community and with the Salesian Family.*

³⁹ Cfr. GC21 311.

⁴⁰ Cfr. C 119.

554. *“The local communities should schedule their activities in such a way as to ensure that the confreres participate in times of prayer and of community reflection, as well as have the time necessary for personal and continuous updating.”*⁴¹

555. *Let the **Rector** accord a priority to the religious and pastoral animation and the spiritual direction of his community. “His first task is to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity.”*⁴² *“He also has a direct responsibility toward each confrere; he helps him realize his own personal vocation and carry out the work entrusted to him.”*⁴³ *Let him ensure that daily life lived in fidelity to the Constitutions and Regulations becomes a good formation experience, and that there is effective collaboration and shared responsibility among the confreres. Let him encourage the animating presence of his community within the educative and pastoral community, and cultivate its communion with the Province, the Congregation, the Salesian Family and the Church.*

556. *The **Provincial Formation Plan***⁴⁴ *should include a plan for ongoing formation with a view to the spiritual renewal, the pastoral preparation and the educative and professional competence of the confreres.*⁴⁵ *When formulating it, attention must be paid to the various roles and functions and to the different ages, situations and periods of life (the first five years of full involvement in the apostolate, the period of full maturity, important anniversaries, old age...).*

557. *“All Salesians in their mature years should periodically be offered the possibility of spending an appropriate period of time for their renewal. Provinces should take this need into account in their planning, and each confrere should respond to it for his own good and that of the community.”*⁴⁶

558. *The **Provincial** animates the integral and ongoing formation of the confreres,*⁴⁷ *in the first place giving a formation dimension to the ordinary government of the Province. In this endeavour let him involve also his Council and the provincial animators, especially the Provincial Commission for formation and the Rectors. Let him be ready to collaborate with other Provinces, with the Salesian Family and with the Church.*

559. *The **Provincial Commission for formation** collaborates with the Provincial and his Council in animating the process of ongoing formation of the communities and the confreres,*⁴⁸ *and in seeing to the formation of Salesians together with the laity. In line with the Provincial Formation Plan, the Commission offers a programme of initiatives in the area of guidance, paying attention to the different situations of the confreres in terms of their age, specific vocation, and different roles.*

560. *The sharing of the Salesian spirit and mission with the laity calls for a sound **formation together**,*⁴⁹ *which finds its ideal setting in an educative and pastoral community that functions well.*⁵⁰

⁴¹ GC21 327b; cfr. R 69, 44.

⁴² C 55.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Cfr. previous n. 18, 211.

⁴⁵ Cfr. GC23 223.

⁴⁶ R 102.

⁴⁷ Cfr. C 161.

⁴⁸ Cfr. GC21 322.

⁴⁹ Cfr. GC24 138.

⁵⁰ Cfr. GC24 43, 144.

*The Provincial Formation Plan should include guidelines for the formation of Salesians and laity together; it should envisage certain experiences, contents, the persons responsible and the periods to be dedicated to formation.*⁵¹

561. *Let **the Regions, linguistic groupings or Provincial conferences** collaborate in initiatives and programmes of ongoing formation and, if possible and convenient, let them establish a team or a centre for ongoing formation.*

*In particular, let them organize at inter-provincial level periodical initiatives for the specific preparation of Rectors or other groups of confreres. Such initiatives are under the responsibility of the Provincials of the Region or of the Conference concerned, of the Regional Councillor and of the Councillor for formation.*⁵²

562. *It belongs to the General Council to approve the creation of **inter-provincial and regional centres for ongoing formation**. Those responsible for these centres should depend on the General Councillor for formation and on the Regional Councillors.*

563. *Advantage should be taken of the initiatives organized in communion and collaboration with other groups of the Salesian Family, and also the opportunities offered at the ecclesial and inter-Congregational level. “An attitude of ready acceptance should be fostered to formative opportunities offered by different organisms of the Church and of society.”*⁵³

564. *“Provincial conferences or linguistic groupings must see to the provision of an adequate and up-to-date **Salesian bibliography** in the vernacular. In addition it is hoped that study groups will be formed at regional level, which will be able to provide in due course Salesian publications and other services.”*⁵⁴

565. *The General Council will organize initiatives to **specifically prepare Provincials** for their role of animation and government. Opportunities for formation are also available to them, for example, at the level of the Provincial conference, in regional meetings and in Team Visits.*

⁵¹ Cfr. GC24 145.

⁵² Cfr. GC21 323; R 101.

⁵³ R 101.

⁵⁴ GC21 342.

Fidelity to the commitment made at our religious profession is a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us.

Our perseverance is founded entirely on the fidelity of God who loved us first, and is nourished by the grace of his consecration. It is sustained too by love for the young to whom we are sent, and is expressed in gratitude to the Lord for the gifts that salesian life offers us.

(Constitution 195)

APPENDICES*

Appendix n. 1

The formation section of the Provincial Directory

Appendix n. 2

The Provincial Formation Plan

Appendix n. 3

Guidelines for the organization of studies

Appendix n. 4

Church and Salesian documents on Formation

*The *appendices* provide

- the contents of the formation section of the Provincial Directory required by the *Ratio*,
- the main suggestions regarding the Provincial Formation Plan,
- guidelines for the organization of studies,
- some important Church and Salesian documents concerning formation.

APPENDIX 1

*The formation section of the Provincial Directory*¹

1. The nature of the Directory

1.1 Art. 87 of the General Regulations states:

566. “**At world level the practical guide** for formation will be the Salesian *Ratio fundamentalis Institutionis Studiorum*, and **at provincial level** a directory approved by the Rector Major with the consent of his council.

The “**Ratio**” sets out in an organic and instructive way the complexus of principles and norms concerning formation which are found in the Constitutions, general Regulations and other documents of the Church and of the Congregation.

The **provincial directory** applies the principles and norms of Salesian formation to the concrete local situations.” (R 87)

1.2 “It is **the duty of the provincial community**, through the various organs of animation and government, to lay down the method of formation according to the needs of its own cultural context and in conformity with the directives of the Church and the Congregation.” (C 101)

It is the responsibility of the **provincial chapter** “to formulate and revise the provincial directory in matters left to be decided at provincial level.” (C 171.4)

1.3 Those decisions of the chapter regarding formation which have a fixed normative force so as to be included in what could be described as the particular law of the province form **part of the directory**. The difference that there is between what has the character of law that is well defined and approved, and the suggestions for the process and procedures that the province wishes to follow, but which of their nature do not have the character of a fixed juridical norm, should be kept in mind.

1.4 The provincial directory is not the same as the **Provincial Formation Plan**. In fact, the directory, on account of its juridical nature, the way it is drawn up, the approval it receives, and the degree of stability in its provisions, cannot provide the type of working flexibility suited to other levels of planning. (cfr ISM 366).

The directory provides a normative framework for drawing up of Provincial Formation Plan (FSDB 24).

2. The contents of the Directory

567. The formation section of the directory, in accordance with the guidelines of the *Ratio* and responding to what the actual situation in the province requires fulfils the following functions.

¹ Cfr C 171.4, 191; R 87, 88, 106.4; ISM 365, 382 and *Elementi Giuridici* 43, 45; VAN LOOY L. *The Provincial Directory*, AGC 365 (1998) 50-56

2.1 As regards the formation process.

I. To provide the norms considered appropriate for the Provincial Formation Plan. To set out the criteria and the basic practical choices which ought to guide and characterize the arrangements for formation (FSDB 24).

II. To determine by means of what kind of service “that is mindful of the different situations, reflects, plans and evaluates” the province will ensure that “formation is carried out in an organic, systematic and coordinated manner”: the Provincial with his council, the Provincial Commission for Formation, or some other body (FSDB 22).

III. To propose the criteria regarding the composition of the Provincial Commission for Formation, the main tasks of the Provincial Delegate and of the Commission, the kinds of link with the Provincial and his council and with the other provincial delegates and animators (FSDB 247).

IV. To determine the arrangements to ensure the unity and continuity of the process of initial formation (FSDB 280, 281, 314, 315, 317).

V. To propose the criteria to ensure the continuous flow of information regarding the situation of confreres in initial formation, especially on the occasions of their passing from one stage or community to another, for the termly assessments, for the conservation of documentation, for the involvement of the community in expressing an opinion regarding the admissions (FSDB 296, 298).

VI. To indicate the nature of the collaboration and co-responsibility at interprovincial level in the area of initial and ongoing formation, in particular with regard to interprovincial communities and study centres (FSDB 146, 171, 173, 230, 246, 248, 286, 300, 418, 458, 509, 514, 548, 558).

VII. To propose guidelines for contacts with families especially during initial formation (FSDB 74).

Pastoral activities

VIII. To propose the criteria for the arrangement of a programme of pastoral activities during initial formation (FSDB 202-204).

Intellectual formation

IX. To establish the basic guidelines regarding studies during initial formation and for the choice of study centres and their organization bearing in mind the norms of the Congregation, the requirements of the mission and the provincial context (FSDB 157, 179-180).

X. To indicate the conditions to ensure the quality of the Salesian study centres, the soundness and continuing stability of the teams (FSDB 170).

Salesian studies

568 XI. To lay down the general provisions for the study of “Salesianity” during initial formation required by the *Ratio*.

To decide on the means necessary for the knowledge, the study and the teaching of “Salesianity” and for a “Salesianity library” sufficiently complete and up to date (FSDB 51).

Qualification and specialization

XII. To indicate the choices and the methods to be used for the qualification and specialization of confreres and for the drawing up of the provincial Plan for qualification. (FSDB 158, 285)

To establish the criteria regarding other studies to be undertaken during initial formation other than those of the general curriculum, for example university studies, and the formation conditions to be guaranteed (FSDB 181-184).

Ongoing formation

XIII. To indicate the criteria for the Provincial Plan for ongoing formation to be included in the Provincial Formation Plan indicating decisions, criteria in the different areas, for the different groups, for different categories (e.g. Rectors, those doing the quinquennium, SDB and laypeople together, members of the Salesian Family etc.) FSDB 556).

2.2 With regard to the stages of formation in particular.

Prenovitiate

569. XIV. To decide on the ways the immediate preparation for the novitiate is to take place, and to establish the criteria and basic form of intellectual formation in this stage (FSDB 348-350, 353).

XV. To make decisions regarding the medical and psychological examinations required by the *Ratio* before or during the prenovitiate (FSDB 351).

XVI. To determine the procedures for admission to the prenovitiate (FSDB 351).

Novitiate

XVII. To establish the choices of the province regarding the novitiate: its location, the community, the formation team, the studies, pastoral experiences, the way of celebrating first professions (FSDB 358, 365, 367, 374, 375, 378, 382, 383, 391).

Postnovitiate

XVIII. To provide norms regarding the period immediately after the novitiate: location, community, duration, and pastoral experiences (FSDB 412-422).

XIX. To specify the arrangements regarding the programme of studies in the postnovitiate, indicating particularly how their special Salesian pedagogical and philosophical character is to be ensured above all if a non-Salesian study centre is being attended (FSDB 423-427).

XX. To make sure that there is a formation curriculum for Salesian brothers that is serious but flexible and adaptable both to the specific nature of the different roles and to the concrete possibilities of the candidates which takes account of the many varied ways it is possible to live the consecrated lay state in the Congregation (FSDB 322, 424-425).

Practical Training

570. XXI. To make recommendations to ensure the formation aspects of the period of practical training at local and provincial level; the kind of community, guidance, provincial initiatives, support material, assessments (FSDB chapter 9).

Specific formation

XXII. To determine the way the specific formation of the Salesian brother is to be carried out and his professional formation guaranteed (FSDB 480).

XXIII. To indicate the provincial decisions regarding the specific formation of the Salesian priest: the form of the declaration of intention prior to beginning theological formation, the community, study centre, studies of Salesianity, apostolic experiences (FSDB chapter 10).

Perpetual profession

XXIV. To provide the criteria, the choices and the conditions for the drawing up of a programme of preparation for perpetual profession (FSDB 513). To specify the particular way the candidate should express his intention of beginning to prepare for perpetual profession (FSDB 515).

3. Evaluation of the formation section of the Provincial Directory.

571. To indicate the manner and the frequency of the evaluation of the application of the directory. “Let every Province evaluate on a regular basis – normally through the Provincial Commission for Formation, or if considered opportune, in line with its proper function, through the Provincial Chapter – the practical implementation of the formation section of the Provincial Directory. This information will be sent by the Provincial to the Councillor for Formation.” (FSDB 23).

APPENDIX 2

*The Provincial Formation Plan*¹

1. Planning formation

572. The planning of formation in a province can be done *in different ways and at different levels*: in the *Provincial Directory*, which provides a basic background and indicates the main choices in the province, in the *Provincial Formation Plan*, in the *annual programming*, in the *planning of different sectors*, in *projects*, and analogously at local level.

Formation planning also applies at interprovincial level for those provinces which share stages of formation, occasions or initiatives or which find it useful to have some common points of reference.

For all these kinds of planning the *Ratio* provides a common foundation and a basic term of reference.

2. The Directory and the Plan

573. The nature and scope of the Directory and the Provincial Formation Plan are different.

The formation section of the **Directory** is the first response to the obligation that the Constitutions lay on the provincial community, entrusting it with providing formation structures. (cfr C 101). It is not the task of the Directory to present the complete arrangement of formation. At the same time, on account of its juridical nature, the way it is drawn up, the approval it receives, and the degree of stability in its provisions, it cannot provide the type of working flexibility suited to other levels of planning. (cfr ISM 366).

The Provincial Formation **Plan** on the other hand, provides an organic view of formation, offers more specific and complete contents, that are more practical and more easily adaptable. The plan is not limited to presenting the fundamental aims and the general lines of action but specifies in a practical manner the way formation should be carried out, considering what is important, what is urgent and what is possible. Ordinarily it is not drawn up by the Provincial Chapter; it is approved by the Provincial with his council. The directory provides a fundamental normative frame of reference for the drawing up of the Plan (FSDB 24).

3. The Provincial Formation Plan

3.1 Nature and purpose

574. **Formation** ought to be organized at different levels **according to a plan** and ought to be lived with a planning mentality (FSDB 211) It is one of the methodological formation strategies indicated in the *Ratio* (cfr FSDB Chapter IV).

¹ The *Ratio* mentions the Provincial Formation Plan and the plan of the local formation community; here we bring together the main points regarding the Provincial Plan.

Every **Province** ought to have a Provincial Formation **Plan** as the overall plan of action (FSDB 18.24) The Plan expresses in a concrete manner the *thinking and the formation praxis* of the province in view of a gradual, continuous, structured and unified process. (FSDB 235).

More than a document to be drawn up or a text to be produced, the Plan is *the expression and the working tool of a community* which in the area of formation wants to operate in a reflective and concerted manner, fostering communication and coordination, taking forward a systematic and continuous activity, capable of dealing with the actual situation and of renewing itself. (FSDB 211). The Plan is a concrete expression of the formation model and a criterion and guide for its implementation.

The Plan is essential, especially to ensure the unity and continuity of *the initial formation experience*, which takes place in successive periods, in different communities and sometimes in different provinces, and to ensure a continuous link between the phases and the convergence of everyone's efforts. (cfr FSDB 210, 314, 317)

The Plan ought to have the *stability and the flexibility* that formation requires. It does not reflect an activity subject to constant experimentation, but leads to the consolidation of a provincial practice open to periodic assessment and capable of adapting itself to situations. In this sense, the process of drawing up the Provincial Formation Plan is open-ended.

The close relationship between the formation Plan and the *actual situation of the province* requires that it harmonizes with the other provincial plans. At the same time, the existence of differences in the various situations in the province means that the provincial plans can have different characteristics.

3.2 Preparation, structure and contents

575. The Provincial Formation Plan is the result of wide *participation*: it includes the involvement of confreres, the cooperation of the different kinds of animation (e.g. the provincial formation Delegate and Commission, Rectors, formation personnel) and in particular the contribution of the Provincial and the council.

The process of drawing up, implementing and evaluating the Plan provides a *formation opportunity* for all those involved in formation.

The drawing up of the Provincial Formation Plan involves constant attention to its **terms of reference** (FSDB 24):

- *vocational identity*, the blueprint of the Salesian which formation is aiming at, and the requirements to achieve it as they are indicated in Church and Salesian documents and especially in the *Ratio* and the Directory;
- *the formation situation* in the province.

576. The **Plan**, besides highlighting the terms of reference contains:

- those aspects relevant to the formation **situation** in the province: the positive ones, the strong points and resources, the weak points and urgent issues;
- the **working plan** which indicates:

a) *the organization of formation in the province*:

setting out for formation in general, and for some situations, phases or persons in formation in particular, the choices to be followed up, the priorities and objectives to be pursued; the way ahead, the strategies, the actions to be undertaken; the requirements to be assured: (who, with what responsibilities and roles; coordination and collaboration; locations, means etc.)

b) *some particular aspects:*

- the specific features of the *planning for each stage* of formation (FSDB 212);
 - the *formation programme for the Salesian brother* (RFSDB 434, 480);
 - the *curriculum of studies* (FSDB 157);
 - the gradual and systematic programme of *studies of Salesianity* (FSDB 51, 160);
 - the *programme of pastoral activities* during initial formation (FSDB 202-204);
 - the *preparation for perpetual profession* (FSDB 513);
 - the *programme of ongoing formation* (FSDB 547, 556);
 - the *provincial plan for the qualification and specialization* of the confreres (FSDB 158), with particular attention to the qualification of formation personnel (FSDB 284-285);
 - the *general lines for the formation of Salesians and laity together* during initial and ongoing formation (FSDB 325, 560).
- the method and the timing of the **evaluations** at various levels and of the **review** of the plan according to circumstances (FSDB 18.24)

4. The plan of the local formation community

577. The formation community has as “*its distinguishing feature a plan that brings everything to focus* on just one purpose: the formation of the Salesian. In an atmosphere of shared responsibility, all strive together to adhere to certain values, objectives, experiences and formation methods, and from time to time they programme, evaluate and adjust their life, work and apostolic experiences to meet the requirements of the Salesian vocation.” (FSDB 222)

The purpose, the contents and the process of drawing up the community formation plan are analogous to those for the provincial plan.

Taking *as a foundation* the indications in the *Ratio* and the form given by the Directory and by the provincial Plan to the nature and the purpose of the phases, to the different aspects of the formation experience, to the conditions to be ensured, to the contents to the strategies, to the manner of participation and coordination, to the evaluations etc., *the local formation community will draw up its own plan which:*

- presents the *formation aims* and the features of the formation experience of the stage (formation profile, frame of reference);
- compares this with its own particular *situation* (through community evaluation consideration of the challenges of the context -Salesian, ecclesial and social;
- traces out the practical *working outlines* for each area according to the different aspects of formation and establishes the conditions which promote the achievement of the purpose of formation (priority objectives, targets, strategies, interventions, programmes, responsibilities and evaluations etc).

5. The Plan, community and formation team

578. The realization of the plan requires as a *necessary condition* the commitment of the provincial and local communities and the existence and functioning of appropriate teams. A plan that is not taken up by a community or by a team (group, animating nucleus), by the Rectors and the formation personnel remains ineffective.

Ordinarily speaking, this task is taken up at provincial level by the provincial Delegate and by the provincial formation Commission in agreement with and under the responsibility of the Provincial and his council, to whom is entrusted the primary responsibility for formation (FSDB 2). At local level by the Rector and by a formation team that has consistency and is suitably stable (FSDB 222, 233, 235, 284) in the various stages.

APPENDIX 3

Guidelines concerning the organization of studies

1. Introductory notes

579. **1.1** “*The Salesian’s intellectual formation comprises his basic formation, that is, the studies that form part of the different phases of initial formation, specialization or professional training, and ongoing formation.*” (FSDB 130). The guidelines presented here refer to the basic studies intended for all Salesians; they do not deal with the studies which form part of the provincial Plan for the qualification of confreres. The presentation is in the form of proposals which correspond either with the contents or with some particular points for attention or emphasis.

It is the task of those in charge to translate the suggestions into a programme that concentrates on the organization of the contents and their development and ensures a presentation that is gradual and of high quality, avoiding unnecessary repetitions or anticipations. The material that is presented should be utilized with the seriousness demanded by its formation purpose and with the flexibility that the circumstances require.

The arrangements take into account the particular requirements of the *specific vocation* of the Salesian brother and that of the Salesian priest, and at the same time they need adapting to them.

For *candidates to the priesthood* or the permanent diaconate the indications and norms of the Church are followed.

1.2 A Salesian’s studies should be seen *from the point of view of intellectual formation* as it is presented in the *Ratio* both in the general description of intellectual formation (Chapter 3) and in the presentation of intellectual formation in the different phases. It is a question of seeing it from a *formation viewpoint*, attentive to its Salesian character and from the perspective of *ongoing formation*.

1.3 The presentation of the organization within each phase is subdivided into *areas*: Salesian subjects, humanities and education, the Christian mystery and theological studies, in which the emphasis varies according to the phases. In some cases the expression “the area of the Christian mystery” has been preferred to “theological studies” because it is not really a question of the formal teaching of theology, which has its own particular methodology and presupposes the adequate assimilation of philosophical and pedagogical studies.

580 **1.4** *The pastoral perspective*, the viewpoint of *inculturation* and of *communication* and other aspects should constitute a constant feature of intellectual formation rather than just being translated into topics or particular courses.

1.5 *The situations and the contexts* in which Salesian intellectual formation takes place in the world are many and varied. This variety also impinges *on the organization of studies* and requires a serious, competent and flexible approach in order to translate these directives into a gradual, organic and complete programme.

Besides the variety of the basis circumstances of the candidates, the diversity of the cultural needs that the contexts and the different countries present, the fact that the studies can be undertaken in Salesian centres or in centres that do not depend on us, means that there is also variety in the structuring of some of the phases; for example:

- for the prenovitiate: in some cases it is a question of individuals doing preuniversity or university studies and a special course of studies within a centre; in others of following a full-time special course within a centre; in others again of beginning the philosophical and pedagogical curriculum;
- for the postnovitiate: there are differences in the number of years, in the way the philosophical and the educational courses are integrated; in not a few cases it is a question of studies which are officially recognized and which are successfully completed with a degree;
- for theology: there are courses of four years or of five; with annual courses or cycles; with different sorts of pastoral involvement; with studies that are officially recognized and those that are not.

2. The organization

2.1 The prenovitiate

581. The organization of the studies in the prenovitiate ought to take into account the different backgrounds of the prenovices with regard to their educational, Christian and Salesian preparation, as also the great variety of arrangements for studies in this phase.

The *Ratio* describes some of the tasks of intellectual formation: “The elements to be ensured are: the completion of the required level of civil studies, the consolidation of the cultural foundation, the verification of the capacity for subsequent studies, a knowledge of the language, a serious introduction to Christian doctrine, and a general knowledge of Don Bosco, the Salesian vocation and the Congregation.” (FSDB 353)

2.1.1 Guidelines for Salesian subjects

582. A presentation of Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation appropriate to the stage of formation. As a first introduction the reading of a few well-chosen texts or extracts with reference to the current Salesian situation can be sufficient.

In particular: a biography of Don Bosco, the *Memoirs of the Oratory*; reference to the testimony of some witnesses to the Salesian vocation; a glance at the Salesian presence and mission in the world; some introductory information about the Salesian Family.

2.1.2 The area of the Christian mystery

583. An introduction and preliminary ideas on some aspects of the Christian vocation, based on the simple presentation in the Catechism:

- introduction to reading and listening to the Word of God through liturgical texts, presentation of some key moments in the history of salvation;
- basic aspects of Christian initiation: prayer, liturgical and sacramental life (Eucharist and Reconciliation); living according to Christian moral principles;
- the mission and witness of the Church and the different vocations in the Church.

2.1.3 Some cultural aspects

584. Bearing in mind the different backgrounds and level of preparation of the novices some points can be made:

- A. basic courses in language, composition and general knowledge;
- B. an introduction to methods of study and reflection;
- C. a basic presentation of human values, human relationships and communication;
- D. basic aspects of self-knowledge, of one's own affectivity and its expressions, an analysis of one's own experience.

2.2 The novitiate

585. The general Regulations indicate the *purpose* and some of *the areas covered* by studies during the novitiate: "they should have as their overriding objective initiation into the mystery of Christ, so that the novice by means of contact with the word of God may develop a deeper life of faith and a loving knowledge of God. A solid theological basis for the religious life should also be presented. The Constitutions, the life of Don Bosco and our traditions should be studied." (R 91)

2.2.1 Guidelines for Salesian studies

586. For a knowledge of the Salesian vocation as seen in the Founder, in the Constitutions and in the experience of the Congregation, some central ideas should be presented that are based on serious and up-to-date sources:

- A. Don Bosco: his life, his surroundings, his vocational and spiritual experience, his relationship with other saints. Some examples of Salesian holiness.
- B. The plan of life presented in the Constitutions and the general Regulations is the foundation of studies in the novitiate and of reflection on the unifying and specific aspects of the vocation and of the Congregation.
- C. Relevant points in the history of the Congregation, its development in the world. The Rector Majors.
- D. An overview of the Salesian Family and of the Salesian Movement, communion among different vocations.

2.2.2 The area of the Christian mystery

587. For a deeper and more conscious "sequela Christi" in Salesian consecrated life:

- A. A general introduction to the scriptures, to the reading and understanding of the biblical texts in the liturgy in view of personal and community prayer and of catechesis.
- B. The systematic presentation of some fundamental aspects of faith and the spiritual life; introduction to different kinds of prayer; introduction to the liturgical year and to the liturgy of the hours.
- C. Basic theological concepts of the theology of the consecrated life, with particular reference to apostolic spirituality; a brief presentation of the historical development of consecrated life and of different kinds of vocation.
- D. Some topics of fundamental morality (covenant, conscience, laws, virtues and sin) and some aspects of social morality.

2.2.3 The humanities and educational science

588. Essential information should be provided on:

- A. Interpersonal communication, ability to relate, dialogue.
- B. Some psychological, sociological and pedagogical aspects of the religious life.
- C. The socio-religious and cultural situation of one's own country, with particular reference to the position of the Church and to the youth situation.
- D. Social communication in Salesian life, in Don Bosco and in the Congregation. A Salesian approach to music, singing and drama: theoretical and practical aspects.
- E. The study of Italian and other languages among those more useful and widely diffused.

2.3 The postnovitiate

589. The core of the humanistic and philosophical disciplines, linked with educational science, is from the intellectual point of view, the essential and specific element of this phase, which leads the confrere to progressively integrate faith, culture and life.

The particular structuring and the delicate process of cultural and religious synthesis in this period requires a special arrangement of the studies. For those confreres preparing for the priesthood the directives of the Church regarding the study of philosophy and the humanities should be borne in mind.

2.3.1 Guidelines for Salesian studies

590. The following subject matter should be borne in mind:

- A. Don Bosco the educator in the cultural context of the 1800s. The educational praxis of the first Salesians. A critical study of some original pedagogical texts, interpretation and modern application.
- B. The Salesian method of education (Preventive System). The Educative Pastoral Plan: the guidelines of the Congregation.
- C. The Salesian presence in one's own setting and its various manifestations.
- D. Features of the groups of the Salesian Family present in one's own province.

2.3.2 Philosophical, human and educational sciences

591. In this area special attention should be paid to the need for every Salesian to be qualified, and to adaptation to the needs of the two forms of vocation. Not a few aspects of human sciences including the philosophical are necessary for the basic common formation, even though they may possibly be organized differently.

These philosophical, human and educational sciences require that special attention be given to the needs of inculturation.

592. A. *Philosophical disciplines*

- Introduction to Philosophy: philosophy in the spiritual development of mankind (origin, nature, relationship with other sciences, autonomy; problems involved; indispensability and inadequacy).
- Philosophical anthropology: the human person (fundamental anthropological aspects and the structure of the human personality; Christian personalism; comparative humanism; philosophy of history and of culture).

- Gnoseology: the problem of truth (possibility, structure, characteristics and validity of knowledge; the critical sense; rationalism and empiricism; ideology, demystification, hermeneutics, philosophy of language).
- Metaphysics: the problem of being and of values (the possibility and validity of metaphysics; being as the foundation of reality; metaphysics and antimetaphysics vis-à-vis “integral experience”; action and contemplation; axiology and historicism).
- Natural Theology: the problem of God (the possibility and legitimacy of a natural knowledge of the Absolute; philosophical topics of existence and the nature of God; the relationship between reason and faith and between philosophy and theology; contemporary forms of atheism; phenomenology, philosophy and history of religion).
- Philosophy of Nature: the problem of the cosmos and of science (intelligibility of material reality; scientific cosmology and philosophical cosmology; scientific knowledge and philosophic knowledge; the problem of epistemology).
- Ethics: principles and dynamics of human behaviour; human behaviour in relation to God; conscience and freedom; economics and law; problems of bioethics.
- Social philosophy: fundamental principles; ways of “reading” a social order; socio-political syntheses vis-à-vis those of Christian inspiration; international relationships and the world community; Social teaching of the Church.
- Philosophy of education: the ultimate foundations of education.
- Aesthetics: art and other human activities; aesthetic taste and judgement; art and morality.

B. *Philosophy and the historical record*

- Western thought: greco-hellenist philosophy, the patristic, medieval; key points of modern philosophy.
- Eastern thought.
- The major contemporary philosophical systems.
- Historical and theoretical characteristics of local culture. The more significant authors and texts of the thought of one’s own country.

593 C. *Pedagogical Disciplines*

- Introduction to pedagogy: nature and purpose of education. The major schools, perspectives of contemporary education. Different pedagogical models.
- The history of education and of pedagogy.
- General methodology of pedagogy and Christian pedagogy.
- Educational technology: media, new media, information technology; meaning and responsible use.

D. *Psychological Disciplines*

- General and dynamic psychology : fundamental psychological processes ; psychology of human development; the structure of personality: different theories. Elements of psychopathology.
- Psychology of education and of teaching.
- Psychology of religion with particular reference to the world of young people.
- Social psychology: communication, interaction, group dynamics, community dynamics. Communication and languages.

E. *Sociological Disciplines*

- General sociology: sociological aspects of the family, of the youth situation, of the school, of the world of work and of technical education.
- Sociology of religion, with particular reference to the world of young people.

- The social teaching of the Church (cfr Social Philosophy)
- Cultural anthropology, with reference to local culture, its history and characteristics.

594. F. *Science of Social Communication*

- Theory of communication and psycho-social problems of social communication,
- Different forms of communication, in particular the new technologies (printing, radio, TV, internet...).
- Social communication “way of total education” critical reading and listening; application in various contexts: catechesis, liturgy, pastoral work in general, teaching and cultural formation.
- Social communication and the Salesian mission.
- Salesian forms of information; information in the life of confreres.

G. *Artistic formation*

- Education in music and singing.
- Theatre and other forms of artistic expression useful in the Salesian youth mission.
- The theory and practice of sacred music in relation to the liturgy, catechetics, pastoral practice and education.

H. *Methodologies*

- Methodology of study and research, reading of texts, historical criticism.
- Elements of general didactics.
- Elements of pedagogy and didactics as in the teaching of religion in schools and techniques of socio-cultural animation for teaching, catechesis, education and evangelization and other informal initiatives.
- Elements of economics and administration.
- The study of Italian and other languages necessary or useful for the mission, the study of Latin for candidates for the priesthood.

2.3.3 *The area of the Christian mystery*

595. The organic and fundamental presentation of the Christian mystery already begun in the previous phases is continued. The presentation should underline the connection with the consecrated vocation and the educational and pastoral mission.

These presentations should include:

- some particular biblical themes for a fuller understanding of the proclamation and in view of the spiritual life and of catechesis.
- elements of sacramental liturgy in relation to pedagogy and catechesis.
- a reflection on the Church in the World and on evangelization (relationship between culture, education, faith), and the presentation of pastoral guidelines especially those regarding youth and educational pastoral ministry.

2.4 **The specific formation of the Salesian brother**

596. The *Ratio* points out the different character that the specific formation of the Salesian brother assumes, and distinguishes between specific formation and professional qualification and refers to areas of intellectual formation during the specific formation.

Bearing in mind the different situations of individuals and of communities, of programmes and of duration, and above all the formation purpose of this period, the organization of studies emphasises the following points.

2.4.1 Guidelines for Salesian studies

597. Some material more directly connected with the specific formation of the Salesian brother and his pastoral and educative activity.

- A. Don Bosco the Founder in the social and ecclesiastical situation of his times; the lay aspect of the mission. Examination of the current situation.
- B. Salesian spirituality and Salesian youth spirituality: some particular aspects, reference to S. Francis de Sales, pedagogy of the spiritual life, the figure of the Salesian brother and of the Salesian priest, other expressions of spirituality within the context of the Salesian Family.
- C. Salesian pastoral ministry: guidelines of the Congregation (of the recent General Chapters and of the Rector Major), Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry. The involvement of lay people in the Salesian Family and in the Educative Pastoral Community, the presence and specific role of animation of Salesians.
- D. The Salesian mission in the world: challenges in different contexts, priorities and significance. Salesian presence in one's own area or province; the provincial plan.

2.4.2 The area of the Christian mystery

598. Experience of the consecrated life and the consideration of the mission requires an organic and up-to-date vision of faith and of the mission of the Church in the world of today with particular reference to some subject areas:

- A. Introduction to sacred Scripture (OT and NT) and further study of the central themes of the history of salvation from a spiritual and pastoral point of view.
- B. Reflection on the situation of the Church and on the current teaching of the Church faced with the challenges of the new evangelization.
- C. Deeper theological study of the religious life.
- D. Personal and social morality; the teaching of the Church
- E. Pastoral aspects of ministry in the world of work; elements of pastoral and catechetical methodology in relation to those to whom the mission is addressed.

2.4.3 Other areas

599. Service to the world and to young people in terms of today's culture means paying attention to other subject areas:

- A. Socio-political formation: elements of sociology; the world of work (politics, the market, trade unions...); social progress; elements of economics and administration.
- B. Social communication in the educational and pastoral context; techniques and technologies of social communication; the use of various educative and pastoral languages. Techniques of animation. Music.
- C. Development of the principle instruments of information technology.

2.5 The specific formation of the Salesian priest

600. “The specific formation of a candidate for the priestly ministry follows the norms and directives laid down by the Church and the Congregation, and has as its scope the preparation of a priest who will be a genuinely Salesian pastor and educator.” (C 116) The studies too are planned from this perspective.

“The theological studies must last four years. In the faculties where the three year institutional course is followed by enrolment in a two-year course for a licentiate in the ecclesiastical sciences, the fourth year of theology is substituted by this two-year programme.” (FSDB 484)

In those cases in which the institutional curriculum of theology is concentrated in three years, followed by a fourth year or by the two-year course for the licentiate, it is important to ensure that due attention and the time necessary are given for the studies of “Salesianity” and pastoral theology.

2.5.1 Guidelines for Salesian studies

601. The phase of specific formation encourages a deeper theological foundation of the charism; a pastoral mentality; a “Salesian” reading of theological topics.

In direct relationship with the figure and the educative and pastoral mission of the Salesian priest, and with the four year study of theology the following aspects are to be further developed:

- A. Don Bosco the priest: spiritual and pastoral profile; lines of his spirituality and of his priestly service, his place in pastoral ministry; Don Bosco the priest-founder in the ecclesiastical and social context of his times. Sources and foundations of Don Bosco’s spirituality, especially St Francis of Sales.
- B. Salesian spirituality and youth spirituality. The spirituality of the Salesian priest: the Salesian priest in the Salesian mission and in different kinds of works, complementarity with the Salesian brother. Some examples of Salesian priests.
- C. The reflections, choices and directives of the Congregation especially through the last General Chapters and in the present: Salesian Youth Pastoral Ministry; the Salesian Family, sharing with lay people. Attention to the pastoral, catechetical, sacramental aspects, to spiritual guidance (the relative disciplines and the particular emphases). The educative pastoral Plan of the province.
- D. The Salesian priest and the spiritual animation of groups in the Salesian Family: knowledge of the different vocations and their spiritual characteristics.
- E. The Salesian mission in the world: pastoral challenges in different settings, priorities and significance.

2.5.2 The area of theological studies

602. The theological disciplines are here grouped around some fundamental methodological units. To provide better direction and to help towards a maturing of the final synthesis, the convenience should be noted of looking at each year, where the concrete structure of the studies allows it, from a unifying thematic perspective, for example for the four year course: the mystery of Christ (1st year), the mystery of the Church (2nd year), the mystery of man redeemed by Christ (3rd year), a theological and pastoral synthesis (4th year).

- A. Sacred Scripture: general introduction to the OT and the NT; further study of some books: exegesis and understanding of their message.

B. Liturgical Theology:

- fundamental notions and principles;
- the Eucharist and eucharistic worship; the celebration of the other sacraments and the sacramentals;
- the pastoral theology of the sacraments;
- the sanctification of time: the liturgical year and liturgy of the hours.

C. Church History - universal (ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary) and local; introduction to patrology.

D. Fundamental theology: introduction to theology; revelation and its transmission through the inspired scriptures, tradition, and the living magisterium of the Church; the credibility of the Christian revelation; Christian revelation and other religions; revelation and inculturation of the faith.

E. Systematic theology: the mystery of God (God one and three); the mystery of Christ (Christology); the mystery of man: creation, man, sin, grace and the theological virtues (Anthropology); the mystery of the Church (Ecclesiology); Mariology; the sacraments of the Church; Christian eschatology.

603. F. Pastoral Theology: general pastoral theology, fundamental pastoral theology; general and special catechetics; youth pastoral ministry; vocational ministry; introduction to ecumenism and to inter-religious dialogue; introduction to missiology; the pastoral use of communications and the use of the media; homiletics.

G. Spiritual theology: theology of Christian experience; the sources of spirituality; different kinds of spirituality; the main currents of Christian spirituality. Apostolic spirituality, lay spirituality, spirituality of the consecrated life. Spiritual direction and spiritual pedagogy.

H. Moral theology. Fundamental moral theology; special moral theology: religion and faith, the social teaching of the Church, morality and economics, sexual and family morality; bioethics.

I. Canon Law:

- historical outline of the Code and a brief presentation of the general norms (Book I) for a correct understanding of the fundamental concepts and the juridical-canonical terminology.
- parts I and II of Book II “The people of God”; from Book III the role of teaching and the ministry of the Word, missionary activity, the Catholic school, means of social communication; important points from Books V, VI, and VII;
- the section on Institutes of consecrated life with constant practical reference to our own particular law, Constitutions and general Regulations; the sacrament of matrimony;
- the complementary legislation of episcopal conferences.

L. Music and Sacred Art:

- The role of song and music in the liturgy, various kinds of music in the liturgy and their function, concrete examples;
- Artistic expression, as a part of the didactic role of the liturgy which is the worship of God and at the same time catechesis of the people; the theological, catechetical and pastoral value of gestures and choreography, of the essential signs of the liturgy, of

places of worship, of the iconography, and its theological, spiritual and catechetical significance.

- M. The study of biblical languages: at least for those who are directed towards academic degrees, and, according to possibility and convenience, of other languages among those more useful and widely diffused.

APPENDIX 4

Church and Salesian documents on formation

604. **Note:** Recent Church and Salesian documents of importance which can be particularly useful for formation are listed below.

It is presumed that reference will be made to: the documents of Vatican II, the Code of Canon Law, documents of the Synods of Bishops and post-synodal exhortations, especially to the Synods on “The consecrated life and its mission in the Church and the World” (1994) and on “The formation of priests in the current situation” (1990) and to the continental Synods.

As regards Salesian documents reference will obviously be made to fundamental Salesian documents both official and unofficial, to recent General Chapters to the statements of the Rector Major and of General Councillors which refer directly or indirectly to formation. For what regards Salesian studies, especially the sources, critical editions and recent publications one can refer to the Salesian Historical Institute and to its periodical *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*.

605 ***Church documents***

- **John Paul II**

- Apostolic constitution *Sapientia christiana* on ecclesiastical universities and faculties, 1979
- Apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 1988
- Apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, 1988
- Letter *Iuvenum Patris*, on the centenary of the death of Don Bosco, 1988
- Apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1992
- Apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata*, 1996
- Encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*, 1998

- **Congregation for Catholic Education (CEC)**

- Circular letter on the teaching of philosophy in seminaries, 1972
- Guidelines for formation to priestly celibacy, 1974
- Circular letter on the study of Canon Law, 1975
- Document on the theological formation of future priests, 1976
- Norms of application for the apostolic constitution *Sapientia christiana*, 1979
- Instruction on liturgical formation in seminaries, 1979
- Circular letter on spiritual formation in seminaries, 1980
- Guidelines on human love, 1983
- *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*, 1985
- Guidelines for the formation of future priests in social communications, 1986
- Admission to the seminary of candidates coming from other seminaries or religious families, 1986
- Studies on the Oriental churches, 1987
- Circular letter, “Some guidelines on formation in major seminaries,” 1987
- The Virgin Mary in intellectual and spiritual formation, 1988
- Guidelines for the study and the teaching of the social doctrine of the Church in priestly formation, 1988
- Instruction on the study of the Fathers of the Church in priestly formation, 1989

- Directives on the preparation of educators in seminaries, 1993
- Formation of seminarians on marriage and the family, 1995
- Basic norms for the formation of permanent deacons - Directory for the ministry and life of permanent deacons, 1998
- The Propaedeutical Period – (informative document), 1998
- **Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life** (formerly SCRIS/CRIS)
 - Instruction *Renovationis causam*, 1969
 - Directives for the mutual relations between bishops and religious in the church, 1978 (with the Congregation for Bishops)
 - Religious and Human Promotion, 1980
 - The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life, 1980
 - Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life, 1983
 - Directives on Formation in religious institutes *Potissimum Institutioni*, 1990
 - Fraternal Life in Community, 1994
 - Inter-Institute collaboration for formation, 1999
- **Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith**
 - Faith and inculturation, 1988
 - Instruction on the ecclesial vocation of the theologian, 1990
- **Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**
 - Circular letter on the missionary dimension of priestly formation, 1970
 - Formation in major seminaries, 1987
- **Congregation for Divine Worship**
 - Instruction *Professionis ritus*, 1970
 - Instruction *Ritus pro collatione ministerium*, 1972
 - Letter “Scrutinies on the suitability of candidates for orders”, 1997
- **Congregation for the Clergy**
 - Letter on “The education and ongoing formation of the clergy”, (*Inter ea*), 1969
 - Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 1994
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² This Index also includes some references to the main contents of the Appendices to the *Ratio*. For certain words (like Admissions, Discernment, Maturity, Motivations, Profession, Suitability, etc.) it may be useful to consult the booklet, *Criteria and norms of Salesian vocation discernment. Admissions*, Rome 2000.

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