

DOCUMENT 3

**FORMATION
TO
SALESIAN LIFE**

SUMMARY

Introduction	n. 240
Part 1 UNITY OF FORMATION	241-250
1. Premises	242-246
1.1 Unity of formation in contents	244
1.2 Unity of formation in the community	245
1.3 Unity of formation in decentralization	246
2. Situation	247-250
2.1 Unity of formation in contents	247
2.2 Unity of formation in the community	248-249
2.3 Unity of formation in decentralization	250
3. Deliberations	251-261
Part 2 PHASES OF FORMATION	262-306
Premises	262-264
1. Continuity and equality of basic formation	262-263
2. Aspects of the formation process	264
1. Period of maturation in vocation up to perpetual profession	265-291
1.1 Immediate preparation for novitiate	265-270
1.2 Novitiate	271-277
1.3 Period of temporary vows	278-291
1.3.1 Immediate postnovitiate	279-284
1.3.2 Tirocinium	285-289
1.3.3 Immediate preparation for perpetual profession	290-291
2. Specific preparation of the salesian priest and brother	292-306
2.1 Formation of the salesian priest	292-298
2.2 Formation of the salesian brother	299-306

Part 3 ONGOING FORMATION	307-342
1. Present situation	307
2. Lines of reflection	308-313
2.1 Concept of ongoing formation	308
2.2 Reasons	309-310
2.3 The subject	311
2.4 Objectives	312
2.5 Areas of ongoing formation	313
3. Practical directives	314-342
3.1 Criteria of organization	314-317
3.2 Responsibility at various levels	318-320
3.3 Structures	321-325
3.4 Lines of action	326-342

FORMATION TO SALESIAN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

240 Taking as a whole the evaluation done by the provincial chapters especially regarding the central theme on evangelization, the urgency of special attention to formation has arisen. For this reason the GC21 has deemed it well to examine formation to ascertain with accuracy how and to what degree the desired renewal proposed by the SGC has been achieved,¹ and to take the necessary and opportune measures so that this renewal may proceed with security and new impetus.

The GC21 therefore, given its practical and evaluative character, rather than bring forth doctrinal formulations on formation—already sufficiently expressed in the SGC—intends to examine the urgent problems which have arisen in the application of the Constitutions, the renewed Regulations, and the ASGC.

Weighing the proposals received from the provinces, examining the Report of the Rector Major on the State of the Congregation, studying the official documents of the Department for Formation, it appears with a certain clarity, that the points which have received specification and practical suggestions may be clustered about these three areas:

- unity of formation in this phase of decentralization;
- the role and characteristic of each phase of the formative process;
- ongoing formation of salesians.

In this study on formation, the Chapter intends to treat both the formation of the salesian priest and that of the salesian brother under the aspects where this formation is the same and also under those where it is diverse.

¹ Cf ASC 283, p. 5.

UNITY OF FORMATION

The principal problems regarding the general aspects of salesian formation converge significantly in the theme of unity in relationship to content, the formative community, and decentralization.² It should be noted that unity of formation is the condition, instrument, and guarantee of the unity of the Congregation.³ The GC21 therefore, in its effort to verify, intends to give this issue special attention not in the totality of its aspects, but in those which have greater need of attention and care; the subject (of salesian formation) marks a point of convergence in much of the expectation in the Congregation today.⁴ 241

Decentralization as willed by the SGC preserves all its value. To emphasize unity therefore does not indicate forgetfulness of decentralization. Unity is in fact realized today in decentralization, and a genuine process of decentralization implies an explicit and concrete obligation of unity.⁵ Logically, this principle is valid also for formation.

1. PREMISES

This Chapter observes that all formation tends to the development of the vocational identity of salesians. It emphasizes further that formation implants the roots of unity in that vocational identity. Aside from legitimate socio-cultural differences, it constitutes the essential unity and most profound reality of the Congregation.⁶ 242

This essential unity or salesian vocational identity finds its chief lines traced in the following elements:

² Cf Sch Precap 444-447; 460-463; 482-487; RRM 143-144; RDF p. 13.

³ Cf Const 99; ASGC 659.

⁴ Cf Sch Precap 445-447, 428; RRM 143; RDF p. 15.

⁵ Cf ASC 272, p. 6.

⁶ ASC 272, p. 6.

- The living presence among us of the Lord and his Spirit which moves us today to reactualize that continuing gift begun in Don Bosco;⁷
- The mission entrusted to us by the Church;⁸
- The contents of "salesian spirit";⁹
- An original plan of evangelical life;¹⁰
- A specific priestly and lay salesian identity;¹¹
- A special community dimension in the family spirit;¹²
- A mode of apostolic presence: "The preventive system."¹³

These aspects in their turn are harmoniously unified in the mission which the Holy Spirit has given us through Don Bosco. In reality this mission specifies the task we have in the Church. It makes us sharers in the same mission of Christ, Apostle of the Father.¹⁴

Unity of formation stands in strict relationship with the phases of formation and continuing formation. In fact it represents the profound reality underlying the continuity of the various phases of formation and the whole harmonious process of continuing formation.

- 243** At the same time we affirm that unity of formation and the principle of continuing formation enrich one another. Nonetheless, in this part of our presentation we direct our attention principally to the initial phases of formation, since these reflect the problems placed in relief by the provincial chapters, and also because they offer special formative characteristics which do not recur.

1.1 Unity of formation in contents

- 244** We, the Salesians of Don Bosco form a community which realizes one single vocation in priestly and lay form.¹⁵ The nature of this vocation, specified by the values of religious consecration, the fra-

⁷ ASGC 1-22.

⁸ ASGC 23-57.

⁹ ASGC 85-105.

¹⁰ ASGC 106-127.

¹¹ Const 36-37; ASGC 140-150.

¹² ASC 272, p. 10; ASGC 84, 481-503.

¹³ Const 25; ASGC 58-84, 93, 360, 365.

¹⁴ Cf Const 2-3, 49, 4; ASGC 26; Sch Precap 459.

¹⁵ Cf Const 2.

ternal community and the apostolic mission, determines the characteristic and unified orientation of our formation within the bounds of its contents.¹⁶

Human maturation and intellectual and professional preparation, deepening of the religious life, and a gradual insertion into the apostolate are factors which formation harmonizes as a vital unity, giving them life in the light of the person of Christ, the model who inspires us.¹⁷

The gospel of Christ, therefore, seen in the style and in the spirit of Don Bosco, constitutes salesianity. It represents the unifying element of the contents of our identity which permits us to prepare and form ourselves as authentic salesian educators and pastors.¹⁸

1.2 Unity of formation in the community

A formative community is truly such¹⁹ when it incarnates our salesian identity in the reality of persons. Unity of the formative community is therefore a necessary factor for the communication of the values of the vital unity of our vocation. In fact it is the life of the community united in Christ through the Spirit²⁰ which forms.

The local formative community is in strict relationship with the provincial community, which is itself "formative."²¹ Formation, in effect, is the "result of the harmonious action of all the confreres, both of the local and of the provincial community."²²

Vocational identity is built on the one hand through the contribution of all the members of the formative community and on the other through the diversity of their functions.²³ The dynamic flow of personal maturation through community growth in the values of salesianity²⁴ merits special attention. Such growth becomes possible through that homelike climate of enriching communication characteristic of the salesian spirit.²⁵

245

¹⁶ Cf Const 3, 100.

¹⁷ Cf Const 101.

¹⁸ Cf Const 41, 49, 101; ASGC 661-672.

¹⁹ Cf requirements for formation community in n. 251 and in Reg 73(b).

²⁰ Cf Const 99, 104; ASGC 680a; Reg 78.

²¹ Cf Reg 89.

²² ASGC 672.

²³ Cf Const 54.

²⁴ Cf Const 52.

²⁵ Cf Const 50, 53.

Unity of formation is assured in the community when as a "family united in mutual trust and in the marshalling of its powers,"²⁶ it has a harmonious formation team of priests and brothers and a serene, constructive rapport between the team and those in formation.²⁷ The rector has principal responsibility as the animator and unifier of formation in this community.

The GC21 reaffirms the determining role of the personal and community participation of those in formation in building the formative community,²⁹ and at the same time the Chapter also emphasizes the indispensable function of those who form and the special need of their influence. In reality, the best descriptions of our salesian identity would amount to nothing if this were not given testimony in practice by the principal animators of the formative community.

1.3 Unity of formation in decentralization

246 Decentralization as the adequate distribution of responsibility for governing at various levels³⁰ is the concretization in the area of structures of the fundamental principle of subsidiarity and pluriformity.³¹

In the structures of salesian formation decentralization has assigned new and important responsibilities within the local,³² provincial,³³ and interprovincial spheres.³⁴

Local structures of formation, because they are decentralized, can adapt more easily to the diverse cultures of the distinct regions. Thus they serve the pluriformity of modes of living the one salesian vocation.³⁵

But decentralized structures must contribute to the unity of formation. It is in fact a case of making the salesians in every region grow in the single and united salesian vocation: modes of cultural expression are pluriform, but the salesian plan of life is one.³⁶

²⁶ Cf Const 105.

²⁷ Cf ASGC 683-686.

²⁸ Cf ASGC 678.

²⁹ Cf ASGC 680, 683.

³⁰ Cf Const 127.

³¹ Cf ASGC 137, 139, 706.

³² Cf Reg 85.

³³ Cf Const 106.

³⁴ Cf Reg 130, 2.

³⁵ Cf ASGC 139, 665.

³⁶ Cf ASGC 272, p. 11; ASC 276, p. 66.

2. SITUATION

2.1 Unity of formation in contents

The rapid changes which have come about in the Church and in culture in recent years are reflected inevitably in the area of formation. The Congregation, after the SGC, has made a notable effort to find new solutions which will guarantee the wholeness of the contents of formation in view of the unity of the salesian vocation. It is not difficult nonetheless to understand that the results have not yet reached desired levels.

One of the most felt problems referred to by numerous provincial chapters³⁷ is without doubt the weakening and at times even the absence of contents typically salesian in formation. This lack, accentuated at times by the need for structures of formation suitable to the exigencies of diverse places and cultures, has produced a sense of excessive genericism, sometimes risking the loss of salesian identity.

In particular the following weaknesses result:

- a partial forgetfulness of the sources of salesian spirituality;
- studies, besides suffering an insufficient substance and systematization, often are not unified under a salesian dimension;
- salesian pedagogical and catechetical preparation is poor, with repercussions in our apostolic undertakings;
- the formative surroundings are negatively influenced by the general weakness of sacramental life and the life of prayer;³⁸
- specific contents for the formation of the salesian priest and of the salesian brother are missing;
- the theology of religious life is insufficiently known.

2.2 Unity of formation in the community

The precapitular schemes, the report of the Rector Major and of the Department for Formation, and also the reflections of the GC21 itself, show that in this period of the past six years there has been an attempt in different places to create formative communities along the lines foreseen by the SGC and the Constitutions and Regulations.

³⁷ Cf Sch Precap 483.

³⁸ Cf RRM 80.

In these communities a team of formation personnel has been determined. There has also been a growth of coresponsibility, of dialog, and of fraternal life. An adequate opening and a suitable flexibility have been possible to realize. A thirst for salesianity has arisen. In most cases these formative communities have given, in the midst of the provinces, top rate witness.

- 249 Nonetheless, the evaluation points also to negative signs. "Too often the impetus is not given to constitute authentic and specific formative communities with clarity of scope, a sufficient number of formation personnel, and adequate means of formation."³⁹ This often arises from an inadequate interpretation of Constitutions art. 105 and art. 81 of the Regulations.

The difficulty of finding confreres suited to the task of working in formation is common throughout the Congregation. It is not rare to see teachers who forget their formative responsibilities. In certain other cases we see them involved in real crises or indulging in placing ideologies before faith. The training or retraining of formation personnel is not always given priority in provincial planning.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in some places, due to an inexact understanding of the family spirit and of the meaning of participation, the need for those who form and that of authority have been called in question.⁴¹

The subject becomes even more sensitive when it refers to the rector in his capacity of advancing true spiritual direction. In general "a tragic lack of masters and guides of the spirit is noted"⁴² with serious repercussions even in the initial phases of formation.⁴³

Finally, the lack of due rapport between the life of the local formative community and that of the provincial community creates at times a dangerous disorientation at the moment of passage from one to another.

The absence of salesian brothers among the formation personnel in the formative communities must also be lamented.

³⁹ RDF p. 14.

⁴⁰ RDF p. 14.

⁴¹ RDF p. 14.

⁴² RDF p. 15.

⁴³ Cf ASGC 678c.

2.3 Unity of formation in decentralization

At provincial level,

250

one notes an incipient assumption of local responsibility, but in various provinces priority is not given to this sector as appears from the unfinished or unsatisfactory Formation Directories and, as a consequence, from the fragmentary and unstable initiatives at the level of new structures, programs, and development of formation personnel.

At interprovincial level,

aside from interesting initiatives of collaboration, one may also find difficulties between the various provinces in settling together problems of formation which they cannot handle separately. At times intermediate structures such as provincial conferences or boards of trustees have not functioned, as for example, a collegial system of collaboration between an interprovincial studentate and the provinces which support it.

At world level,

one is aware of the need for greater clarification of the role of the Department for Formation and the necessity of more specific guidelines particularly as regards studies.⁴⁴

In summary, the evaluation of these years reveals in various places a certain void or non-assumption of responsibility at different levels through a lack of sufficient knowledge, time, suitable persons, means and clear norms.

3. DELIBERATIONS

251

3.1 During these six years the importance of the formative communities demands that the provincial and his council give preferential treatment to their institution or renewal. Therefore a community to be formative should be expressly structured for that purpose, and there ought to be:

- a specifically trained rector and formation team,

⁴⁴ Cf RDF p. 11.

- true spiritual direction,
 - an atmosphere of coresponsibility with diversity of roles and the clarity of formative aims,
 - salesian life-style in study and work with periodic planning, review, and evaluation,
 - and finally, a special sensitivity to the province.
- 252** 3.2 The provincial and his council shall provide that the rectors of the formation communities have a specific and periodic updating to help them fulfill their sensitive and necessary duty of community and personal spiritual direction in the manner envisioned by the SGC.⁴⁵
- 253** 3.3 Every province shall constitute its own provincial formation commission. Its specific duties shall be indicated by the provincial Formation Directory.
- 254** 3.4 The Councillor for Formation, in dialog with the respective regional Councillors and provincials, shall encourage in the provinces an ever greater coresponsibility and active participation in the analysis of the actual situation of the formation communities and shall coordinate a series of advisories calculated to insure a timely realization of the capitular decisions.
- 255** 3.5 The Department for Formation shall be so structured that it may be a more efficacious instrument at the service of unity of formation. This may be obtained through the organization of a team competent in the various sectors of formation.
- 256** 3.6 The Rector Major with his Council through the Councillor for Formation shall see to the creation at the UPS of a suitable center for the preparation of future formation personnel and the re-training of those presently serving. Further, in agreement with the regional groups, he shall promote brief courses and meetings for a greater contact with the problems of every zone.
- 257** 3.7 To deepen those elements which perfect the unity of the salesian vocation, publications on salesian spirituality and their translation into various languages shall be brought out by the Department for Formation.

⁴⁵ Cf ASGC 678a, c.

3.8 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Salesianae*

258

Many of the problems touched on above can be more easily resolved through a global and harmonious view of formation. Therefore, the Rector Major with his Council through the Department for Formation shall elaborate and promulgate as soon as possible for the whole Congregation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Salesianae*.

- The *Ratio* shall set forth in an organic manner the whole of the principles and norms on formation which are found in the Constitutions and Regulations, in the ASGC and in the deliberations of this GC21; in addition, those other elements valid for the whole Congregation which have been set forth in the various Church and salesian documents issued after the SGC.
- It shall emphasize in a special manner the importance and necessity of the integral development of the various aspects of formation: human maturation, intellectual and professional preparation, religious and apostolic life, all within the unity of the salesian vocation.
- The *Ratio* shall give very special attention to salesian spiritual development during the whole formation process. In this sector it shall indicate the features and proper identity of the salesian priest, brother and deacon.

- A *Ratio Studiorum* shall form a part of the document taken as the totality of those general norms regarding intellectual formation in the Congregation. This *Ratio* should ensure the principal elements of a curriculum for salesians (priests and brothers) whether for basic formation or for specific priestly or lay formation. Finally, it should indicate the organic contents of salesianity for the various phases of the formation process.

259

- The *Ratio* shall take into consideration necessary previous pastoral experience for formation personnel⁴⁶ and gradual proportioned apostolic activity for those in formation, emphasizing the indispensable value during such training of the guiding presence of formation personnel. Ordinarily salesian works shall be chosen for these apostolic activities.

260

3.9 *The provincial Formation Directory*

261

Every province, as soon as the *Ratio* is published, shall elaborate or revise its own provincial Formation Directory observing the norms found in that *Ratio*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Cf ASGC 679.

⁴⁷ Cf Const 106.

THE PHASES OF FORMATION

PREMISES

1. Continuity and equality of basic formation

- 262 In its study of the phases of formation the GC21 has always kept in mind two concepts of the SGC: the continuity of the formation process and the equality of basic formation (for lay and clerical salesians) with the necessary distinctions.

1.1 *Continuity of the formation process*

Though in its method this examination is divided into parts, the oneness and the continuity of the formation process is a premise which must always be held present all along the arc of formation. Formation does not end with the finish of initial formation, but continues and endures throughout one's life in terms of ongoing formation. In fact, "the formation process ought to be unified and continuous in its various phases. Every phase should be the continuation of the one which precedes it and a preparation for the following."⁴⁸ This continuity of growth presupposes the principle of gradual development in the diverse aspects of the formation process.

The unified and at the same time complex character of the formation process demands that in every phase harmonized as one vital whole, the various aspects of salesian formation should be present: human and christian maturation, intellectual preparation, the deepening of the salesian religious life, and insertion into apostolic work.⁴⁹ However, emphasis on these aspects must be different according to the specific character of each phase:

- human and christian maturation in preparation for the novitiate;
- deepening of the salesian religious life during the novitiate;
- intellectual preparation in the immediate post-novitiate;

⁴⁸ ASGC 691.

⁴⁹ Cf Const 101.

- insertion into apostolic work during the tirocinium;
- the priestly dimension during theological studies for candidates to the priesthood.

1.2 *Equal basic formation*

"Brothers and future priests receive equal basic formation with a curriculum of equivalent level."⁵⁰ This means that the period of salesian formation up to perpetual profession has the same phases, with similar objectives, contents, and duration for all the members according to their own specific lay or priestly vocation, the specific functions of their apostolate, and their personal gifts and aptitudes.⁵¹

263

2. Aspects of the formation process

The formation process in its various phases has these two aspects:

264

- *maturation in vocation* up to perpetual profession, alike for all salesians according to one's lay or priestly state;
- *specific preparation* of the salesian brother and of the salesian priest.

These two aspects, although different, are not separable from the totality of formation. At no moment do we have a "generic" salesian. However, of necessity for the sake of clarity, we speak in this first instance of the general and common aspects of salesian formation and in a later moment of the specific aspects of the formation of the salesian priest and of the salesian brother.

1. *The period of maturation in vocation up to the perpetual profession*

1.1 Immediate preparation for novitiate.

1.2 Novitiate.

1.3 Period of temporary vows.

1.3.1 Immediate post-novitiate.

1.3.2 Tirocinium.

1.3.3 Immediate preparation for perpetual profession.

2. *Specific preparation of the salesian*

2.1 Priest

2.2 Brother

⁵⁰ Const 103.

⁵¹ Cf Const 103.

1. THE PERIOD OF MATURATION IN VOCATION UP TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

1.1 Immediate preparation for novitiate

265 *Premises*

We do not have a canonical postulancy with juridico-structural aspects. But the Constitutions present the immediate preparation for novitiate as one of those phases "necessary both for the candidate and the community,"⁵² and they indicate in succinct form the objectives, method to be followed, the atmosphere and the place.⁵³ Therefore we prefer to call this phase "immediate preparation for novitiate."

The SGC has not established any fixed or single structure for this period, allowing the provinces to decide the manner of realizing it "according to the needs of the places and in conformity with the directives of the Church and of the Congregation."⁵⁴ A later document⁵⁵ has better explained the nature, objectives, and modality of immediate preparation for novitiate, leaving the concrete programs to the *Formation Directories* of each province.

Situation

266 "In a good number of provinces the prenovitiate is already well established and is bearing good fruit."⁵⁶ But in some places its necessity has not been well understood.⁵⁷ It may be said that the prenovitiate is not yet well programmed and realized as a phase of formation in all provinces.

Deliberations

267 The GC21 emphasizes the necessity of a period of immediate preparation for novitiate and offers the following directives:

a) The objectives singled out in article 109 of the Constitutions indicate, in

⁵² Const 108.

⁵³ Const 109.

⁵⁴ Const 106.

⁵⁵ ASC 276 p. 68-73.

⁵⁶ RRM 147.

⁵⁷ Cf RRM 147.

general, an atmosphere and method "to mature," "to discern one's own vocation," "to deepen one's awareness" and "to decide" wisely and freely to become a salesian religious.⁵⁸ Only when the candidate has *made his option for the salesian life* has he begun his immediate preparation for the novitiate.

b) The structuring of this phase, though flexible and diverse according to place and circumstance,⁵⁹ ought to offer the candidate the chance to *deepen his own vocational choice* through:

- a more profound knowledge of himself;
- spiritual direction;
- openness to the word of God, sacramental life and prayer;
- a general knowledge of Don Bosco and of the Salesian Society;
- an experience of community life;
- salesian apostolic experience.

c) During this period *the human and christian maturity of the candidate* in particular should be evaluated to ascertain whether he has reached the level necessary to begin his novitiate well.⁶⁰ A constant understanding of those in charge of formation at this stage with those of the novitiate, especially with the Master of Novices, will make this evaluation easier.

d) Immediate preparation for novitiate customarily shall last one year and shall not ordinarily be less than six months. The concrete modality of this period shall be established by the Formation Directory of each province.

1.2 NOVITIATE

Premises

The novitiate marks the beginning of the salesian religious experience.⁶¹ It has therefore a most important function with regard to the unity and development of the salesian vocation in its origins.⁶²

⁵⁸ Cf ASC 276 p. 70: 1.3.1.

⁵⁹ Cf Const 110; ASC 276 p. 70-72; 1.3.1 - 1.3.6.

⁶⁰ Cf Reg 73 (C).

⁶¹ Cf Const 111; RC 13,1.

⁶² ASC 276, 2.3.1.

268

269

270

271

Its organization is of the greatest importance. The diversity of the types of salesian novitiate due to the varying number of novices and different cultural and pastoral contexts prevents taking a uniform stance on organizing the novitiate.⁶³ But there is a *fundamental criterion*: The environment and structures of the novitiate must be capable of supporting authentic formation, i.e. of attaining the purposes and fulfilling the contents of the novitiate.⁶⁴

Situation

- 272 "In general information on the novitiates is positive."⁶⁵ The small number of novices⁶⁶ and the impossibility of counting on a large enough and sufficiently qualified formation team has in some places hindered the creation of an environment suitable to attaining the objectives of this phase. In such cases interprovincial novitiates present evident advantages.⁶⁷ In these, however, problems regarding the coresponsibility of the concerned provinces must be resolved. In recent years because of the growing complexity of religious, apostolic, and cultural life, the necessity of specific training for the Master has become evident.

Deliberations

- 273 The ideal to be placed before the novices is to serve Christ in youth, in community and totally, according to our spirit. This ideal we find in the two fundamental books of our thought and life: the gospel and the Constitutions.⁶⁸ So that this phase may be truly efficacious, the GC21 believes it opportune to deliberate:

a) Characteristics of the novitiate

- 274 All the elements of novitiate life shall be aimed at initiating the novices to the awareness and practice of the salesian religious life. The novice, with the help of the community and especially of the Master, interiorizes the salesian values and acquires a mentality of faith rendering him capable of discerning the will of God about his vocation.

⁶³ Cf ASC 276, 2.3.3; Const 106.

⁶⁴ ASC 276, 2.3.3.

⁶⁵ RRM 148.

⁶⁶ RRM 149.

⁶⁷ RRM 148.

⁶⁸ Cf ASC 276, 2.2.2; Const 101.

Those aspects more directly intellectual and pastorally practical must be arranged so as to deepen and enlighten his salesian spiritual experience.⁶⁹

Since our Society is an Institute dedicated to apostolic activity, "formation in the novitiate ought to take into greater account the necessity of preparing the novices even from the beginning and more directly for the type of life or activity which must be their own in the future, and it ought thus teach them to realize little by little in their own lives the conditions of that harmonious unity which links together contemplation and apostolic action."⁷⁰

A more precise specification of the scope and of the criteria for the choice of apostolic experience during the novitiate is to be found in the ASC 276.⁷¹

b) *Contents of the novitiate*

The same ASC 276,⁷² also contains a formulation of the essential contents of this phase. Teaching and assimilation of these contents is to be accomplished at two constantly integrated levels: study-reflection and practice-experience.

275

c) *Training Masters of Novices*

In the next three years the provinces shall train in salesian spirituality those confreres who possessing sufficient practical-apostolic-salesian experience⁷³ are destined to exercise the role of Master of Novices.

276

It is important that the Master of Novices be open to the spiritual and cultural values which the novices bring to the novitiate.

d) *Interprovincial novitiates*

When for the sake of greater formative effect an interprovincial novitiate is deemed best, the responsibility of each province over its own novices shall be manifested:

277

- in participation of the concerned provinces through suitable personnel;
- in the relations of the novice with the provincial of origin;
- in the role of the provincial of origin in the eventual dismissal of a novice.

Concerned provinces, through mutual agreement, will establish norms to regulate their coresponsibility.

⁶⁹ Cf ASC 276, 2.2.1.2.

⁷⁰ RC 5.

⁷¹ ASC 276, p. 79-81.

⁷² Cf ASC 276, 2.2.2.1 - 2.2.2.5.

⁷³ Cf ASGC 684a.

1.3 PERIOD OF TEMPORARY VOWS

- 278** The objectives of formation after the novitiate in view of perpetual profession are to develop the different facets of the salesian vocation and to continue the process of maturation of the young confrere.⁷⁴

These objectives need further explanation according to the various emphases of the different periods which make up this phase; that is, the immediate postnovitiate, tirocinium, and immediate preparation for perpetual profession.

1.3.1 The immediate postnovitiate

Premises

- 279** The novitiate as the initiation to salesian life is certainly a fundamental phase.⁷⁵ But it needs to be complemented and further developed.⁷⁶ The immediate postnovitiate is the first complementary phase. Coherence and continuity between the work accomplished during the novitiate and after it is indispensable⁷⁷ so as to avoid a sudden and unsettling change of life-style which may cause a 'release-of-tension' in vocational growth.⁷⁸ For this reason the immediate postnovitiate is a sensitive and important moment for the religious-salesian maturation of the young confreres.

Situation

- 280** Taking the situation as a whole, the reality for diverse reasons appears quite varied, somewhat confused, and in some cases not well initiated.⁷⁹ Often religious-salesian formation presents deficiencies due to the lack of programs, time, organization, suitable communities, or men qualified to give doctrinal instruction. Spiritual direction, so important in this period, is little practised. In many places a serious program of studies is absent. The nature and objectives of this phase⁸⁰ have not been clear, and for this reason they have not been well understood by many.

⁷⁴ Cf Const 114.

⁷⁵ Cf RC 4.

⁷⁶ Cf ASGC 691.

⁷⁷ Cf ASC 276, 3.2.2.

⁷⁸ Cf ASC 276, 3.3.3.

⁷⁹ RRM 153.

⁸⁰ Cf Const 114; Reg 81.

Deliberations**a) Objectives of the immediate postnovitiate****281**

The GC21 specifies that the immediate postnovitiate is a time of maturation and development:

- in faith, through a gradual integration of faith-and-life, faith-and-culture⁸¹ accomplished especially by means of community reflection and spiritual direction;⁸²
- in the salesian-religious-apostolic vocation learned by the young confreres through an adequate catechetical and pedagogical training, both theoretical and practical, centered in Don Bosco, educator, and the preventive system, especially in view of the tirocinium;⁸³
- in intellectual and cultural formation, including a fundamental introduction to the world of culture (understanding of man, the world, God). To this end the systematic study of philosophy is indispensable⁸⁴ giving an answer to today's problems and not dissociated from the culture proper to each region.

b) The formation community in this phase**282**

It is of vital importance that for this phase an explicitly formative community and a valid salesian environment be constituted. Two types of structure are possible:

- the studentate, i.e. a formation community with its own center of studies;
- a formation community for young confreres who do their studies elsewhere.

Preference shall be given to the studentate according to the norm of Article 81 of the Regulations.

In cases deemed necessary, the Rector Major with his Council may permit those in formation to be integrated in an active community as they do their studies elsewhere.

c) Study centers**283**

The sensitive process of cultural and religious synthesis during this period demands a wise choice of a center of studies whose program is compatible

⁸¹ Cf ASGC 677, 689.

⁸² Cf ASGC 678.

⁸³ Cf Reg 88; ASGC 675, 676.

⁸⁴ Cf RF 59.

with and suitable to development of one's vocation, giving preference to Salesian centers of study, at interprovincial level if necessary.

284 d) *The provincial Formation Directory*

The provincial Formation Directory must indicate concrete directions for this phase of formation: suitable place, suitable community, length (not less than two years), program of studies, apostolic activity.

1.3.2 Tirocinium

285 *Premises*

The tirocinium is "a vital and intense encounter with salesian action" through "an experience educative and pastoral in nature" wherein the young salesian "exercises himself in the salesian mission and in the spirit of the preventive system in order to seek the maturation of his own attitudes, interests and responsibilities."⁸⁵

So that this vital experience may become formative, the salesian in practical training must find "in the community and especially in the rector an attitude of understanding, stimulus, and support."⁸⁶ He ought to do his practical training normally in groups.⁸⁷

Situation

286 If well initiated this period of practice may develop among the most beautiful and positive in the salesian way of life.⁸⁸ Often however practical training is reduced to a period of excessive work in support of an activity or foundation to the detriment of the religious and spiritual formation of young salesians.⁸⁹ At times the communities to which they are sent are not suitable and an absence of guidance and spiritual direction is frequent.

⁸⁵ Cf Const 116; Reg 88.

⁸⁶ ASGC 696.

⁸⁷ Cf ASGC 696.

⁸⁸ RRM 154.

⁸⁹ RRM 155.

Deliberationsa) *Suitable communities* 287

Communities suitable for practical training:

- shall be communities capable of positive influence, possessing a coherent, dynamic, fraternal and family life-style wherein the person in practical training may feel at ease as a responsible member;
- shall be communities in which the young salesian may have the opportunity to give his own original contribution in the certainty of being positively accepted;
- shall have a rector and confreres able to understand, follow-up, help, and evaluate the experience of the confrere in training;
- shall offer the confrere in training pastoral work proportionate to his preparation and his capabilities and the chance for community reflection and spiritual direction to help him attain that personal integration between his intense activity and the spiritual values of religious life⁹⁰ in the union of contemplation and action so characteristic of salesian spirituality.

b) *Salesian assistance* 288

The period of practical training is the one most suitable for formation concretely to salesian assistance understood as an active and fraternal presence among youth.⁹¹ This is one of the most important duties for the salesians of a community where the confrere is doing his practical training, and they fulfill this duty especially through their witness.

c) *The provincial Formation Directory* 289

The provincial Formation Directory shall determine clearly regarding this period:

- the type of work most suitable;
- the method to be used for a periodic evaluation of the confrere in practical training to help him in his experience;
- periodic formation encounters at local and provincial levels.

⁹⁰ Cf "Il tirocinio pratico, resoconto di una consulta" I, 2-3, p. 3; II, 2, p.5.

⁹¹ Cf Const 16, 25.

1.3.3 Immediate preparation for perpetual profession

290 Premises

Perpetual profession is the goal of all this period of vocational maturation, and therefore the whole arc of formation prepares for it. However, since it is the culminating point of religious consecration, perpetual profession should be preceded by a suitable period of immediate preparation.⁹²

Situation

Often this period of immediate and more explicit preparation for perpetual profession has been neglected.

Deliberations

291 The provincial Directory of Formation shall determine:

- the manner of performing a periodic evaluation for the temporary professed;
- a suitable time for reflection to help them reach a mature definitive choice;
- a program for immediate preparation for perpetual profession including the precise manner (form, content, duration).

2. SPECIFIC PREPARATION OF THE SALESIAN PRIEST AND BROTHER

2.1 Formation of the salesian priest

292 In establishing that brothers and future salesian priests receive equal basic formation, the Constitutions have not forgotten the necessary distinctions determined by the specific nature of their vocations and by their functions in our apostolate.⁹³ One of these specific elements for the salesian priest is his sacerdotal ministry. Specific priestly formation, with a program already established in broad outline by

⁹² ASGC 698d.

⁹³ Cf Const 103.

the Church, is further spelled out by the Congregation⁹⁴ for the salesian candidate to priestly life. This specific element ought to be present all through the formative process according to the nature of the various phases, though it receives special care at the time of theological studies.

The Constitutions⁹⁵ and the SGC⁹⁶ indicate certain characteristics of the salesian priest which provide guidelines for his formation.

Situation

There is at this time in the Congregation a variety of situations with regard to priestly formation: theological studentates, groups of theology students who attend non-salesian centers of study (Catholic universities, inter-religious centers, seminaries...) and even, here and there, young confreres placed in no particular house and without special care.⁹⁷

Studentates, certainly not crowded as they once were, offer a good service, even granting their usual faults. The tensions of the past years are for the most part relieved, and the good trend evident in such institutes depends in great part on the teaching and formation personnel who work there.⁹⁸

The situation of the numerous *groups of students* who attend salesian or non-salesian centers varies greatly from group to group and from place to place. Where there are good men in charge of formation (who often teach at the study-centers as well) one may say that the situation is in general satisfactory. In this case, several positive features may be noted: contact with students of other Congregations arouses in our own a more lively sense of belonging to our Society and communicates the richness of our own spirituality to the others; candidates may develop a broader vision of the local Church and the real world. But at times the center is deficient, or those in charge of the group are not suitable; or the community to which the group is attached does not contribute for a variety of reasons to the formation of these young men.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Cf. Const. 21.

⁹⁵ Const. 35, 36.

⁹⁶ ASGC 141-144.

⁹⁷ RRM 159.

⁹⁸ RRM 160.

⁹⁹ RRM 161.

Certain problems arise from the situation:

- an absence of a specifically salesian priestly formation: some confreres feel that they are priests in general; others come out unable to see the specific priestly character of their salesian life;¹⁰⁰
- an absence of seriousness and pastoral and salesian quality of studies;
- difficulty in rapport between the formative community and the center of studies.¹⁰¹

Deliberations

294

a) *Characteristics of the sacerdotal formation of the salesian priest*

Convinced of the need to emphasize the specifically salesian quality of our candidates to the priesthood, the GC21 indicates for the "*Ratio Institutionis*" the following contents. It confides them first of all to those in charge of formation and to confreres responsible as a subject to be explored and constantly meditated upon:

- emphasize the figure of Christ, the Shepherd; the salesian, as was Don Bosco, is witness to him for needy youth, especially through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist and Penance;¹⁰²
- deepen the ecclesial sense of unity and communion with the Church, in particular with the Pope and the Bishops, accepting the *magisterium* with docility and helping youth and the faithful to accept its teachings;¹⁰³
- live the priestly ministry within and from within the local and provincial community¹⁰⁴ in reciprocal complementarity with the salesian brother;
- cultivate the capacity of discerning the will of God in events and persons, preparing the candidate to provide leadership and spiritual direction, especially to the young;

¹⁰⁰ Cf Sch Precap 477, 479.

¹⁰¹ Cf Sch Precap 480.

¹⁰² Cf Const 36, 41.

¹⁰³ Cf Const 44, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Cf Const 34.

- develop special sensibility of the salesian spirit, of the catechetical,¹⁰⁵ vocational,¹⁰⁶ and Marian¹⁰⁷ dimensions of our priestly ministry;
- create the understanding that for the candidate the priesthood is a specific dimension of his salesian vocation, present in all his activities, making him, as Don Bosco, always and everywhere a priest.

b) *Theological-pastoral Formation*

295

There must be a serious theological-pastoral formation including those studies prescribed by the Church,¹⁰⁹ lasting a minimum of four years, arranged and developed according to our specific vocational objectives. In particular, studies on salesianity shall be provided, referring explicitly to the figure of Don Bosco, priest. Duties and other studies which draw one away from the specific task of this period of formation are not permitted.

c) *Pastoral experience*

296

A careful pastoral experience, programmed and duly evaluated, including the guiding presence of those in charge of formation, shall prepare the salesian to be a priest:

- in the midst of youth at the service of the mission of the provincial community;
- incarnated in his social and ecclesial context;
- capable of assuming responsibility for leadership in the salesian family.¹¹⁰

d) *Formation community and study center*

297

The norms established for the immediate post-novitiate regarding kinds of structures possible¹¹¹ are valid also for this phase. Relations between the formative community and the centers of study shall be carefully determined in every case so as to insure the specific needs of each.

¹⁰⁵ Cf Const 20.

¹⁰⁶ Cf Const 29, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Cf Const 65.

¹⁰⁸ Cf Const 36.

¹⁰⁹ Cf "Theological formation of future priests," letter of Sac. Cong. for Cath. Educ. 1976.

¹¹⁰ Cf Const 5.

¹¹¹ Cf this document nn. 282, 283.

e) *Identity of the salesian priest*

- 298 The GC21 recognizes that exploring the identity of the salesian priest along the lines of the Constitutions (articles 35-36) and of the ASGC (141-144) will make simpler the task of formation of the salesian priest. It asks the Department for Formation to continue to study this point in the coming years.

2.2 Formation of the salesian brother

Premises

- 299 The specific nature of the salesian brother within the common salesian religious vocation demands that the consecrated lay state be further studied in the area of basic formation. Therefore, even though what has been affirmed in this document under the phases of formation in nn. 262-291 is fully valid for the salesian brother, we believe it necessary to say a word on his specific formation.

While the Congregation is called upon to develop the formation program already established in broad outline by the Church for the candidate to priestly life, "for the brothers it is a matter very often of building up, or of even creating that formation procedure that will guarantee the harmonious and complete development of their human and religious personality in view of the educational and apostolic mission to which they are called within the Congregation."¹¹²

The GC19,¹¹³ the SGC¹¹⁴ and the Department for Formation¹¹⁵ have already established norms and guidelines to this end. The World Congress of Salesian Brothers¹¹⁶ has studied the matter deeply, clarifying and enriching it.

All formation receives its specific orientation from the nature of the salesian vocation.¹¹⁷ It is necessary therefore to keep in mind all that is indicated in the document on the salesian brother of the GC21—on his identity and his apostolic activity.

We must bear in mind the urgent need of an adequate and up-dated

¹¹² ASGC 660.

¹¹³ Cf ASC 244, p. 71-75.

¹¹⁴ Cf ASGC 660, 688, 692d, 701b.

¹¹⁵ Cf "Salesian Formation," Rome, 1973, p. 28-35.

¹¹⁶ Cf AWCSB p. 375-478 and 558-562.

¹¹⁷ Cf Const 100.

formation for the salesian brother.¹¹⁸ The formation of the brother ought to be considered a problem of absolute priority.

Situation

Notwithstanding the guidelines of the SGC and of other later documents, the 1977 provincial chapters recognize that we are still a long way from an adequate preparation of the brother.

There have been initiatives of various kinds and some promising results. Several of the provinces were interested in this problem during their chapters and have approved different programs for the formation of the salesian brother, but on the whole one perceives an insufficient cultural and pastoral preparation, inadequate for today's religious and apostolic requirements¹¹⁹ and for the new duties which the Congregation confides to the brother.

After the novitiate there have been difficulties not only in providing adequate technical and professional formation, but also religious, apostolic, and salesian.¹²⁰ In truth, the brother is called to be first and foremost an educator and a salesian apostle.

In general new concrete experiences are still lacking in the Congregation, and also perhaps, programs, contents, times and methods of formation which can give direction to and serve as a base for the various provincial Formation Directories.¹²¹ The great diversity of roles of the brother in the salesian community and also the scarcity of vocations make it difficult to build a formation program and to bring it to realization.¹²²

Deliberations

a) The formation program

The concrete possibilities of living the consecrated lay state in the Congregation are many and varied. This pluriformity demands that the provincial Formation Directories shall set forth a serious formation program, but one which is flexible and adjustable recognizing both the special nature of the various responsibilities of the candidate and his actual possibilities.

¹¹⁸ Cf AWCSB p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Sch Precap 382.

¹²⁰ RRM 158.

¹²¹ AWCSB p. 559, prop 19; Sch Precap 405.

¹²² Cf RRM 158.

When the age or cultural preparation of the salesian brother requires it, the provincial with his council may adjust the common program suggested here to the particular situations.

b) *Some characteristics of the lay formation of the salesian brother*

302 The GC21 points out some specific elements of the brother's formation to bear in mind in every phase and constantly to integrate at a twofold level—study-reflection and practice-experience:

- a *salesian religious formation* which will help him to grasp and to ever better guarantee *the meaning and value of the consecrated lay state* in the Salesian Congregation. In the progressive deepening of salesian spirituality, one must be sure to develop above all, the specific traits of the consecrated lay state¹²³ and the brother's reciprocal complementarity with the salesian priest within the salesian community;¹²⁴
- a formation which tends to make of the brother a *salesian lay educator*.¹²⁵ Therefore it is necessary to offer every brother, according to his duties, an adequate pedagogical, cultural, and salesian preparation;¹²⁶
- a *theological and catechetical formation* sufficient to sound the meaning of one's own religious and apostolic vocation, to better understand the presence of God in the realities of the world in which one is placed, and to give witness to and proclaim that presence through coherent life and action;¹²⁷
- a *technical and professional preparation* which will give him within his own possibilities and the educative and pastoral character of his vocation a competence at least equal to that of the layman who exercises the same profession in civil society;¹²⁸
- a *socio-political education* which prepares him for some specific educational activity, in particular in the working world.¹²⁹

c) *The immediate postnovitiate*

303 It is desirable that clerics and brothers lead a common life in the same

¹²³ Cf n. 186-191.

¹²⁴ Cf this document n. 294.

¹²⁵ Cf Reg 92.

¹²⁶ Cf ASGC 688.

¹²⁷ Cf ASGC 688, 701b.

¹²⁸ AWCSB p. 560, prop 19.3b.

¹²⁹ Cf AWCSB p. 560, prop 19.3a.

formation community¹³⁰ where they may gain an appreciation of the two forms of the single salesian vocation.

It is best that technical-professional studies be accompanied by philosophical-pedagogical, and catechetical preparation necessary for the apostolate of the brothers and proportionate to their varying situations.

d) *Advanced formation*

Upon completion of the apostolic and formative experience of practical training, the salesian brother who pursues advanced studies should find both the necessary means and the way facilitated.¹³¹ The choice of a center of study and of a community environment particularly rich in salesian experience and in the opportunity for reflection on one's vocation is very important.

This formation should be accompanied or should be immediately followed by theological and salesian studies proportionate to the technical and scientific studies completed¹³² so as to help the brother in the progressive maturation of his religious and apostolic life.¹³³

e) *Those responsible for formation*

To be faithful to our founding charism, those in charge of formation should seek to know, to present, and to make better appreciated our salesian identity in the two-fold dimension of our salesian religious vocation: lay and priestly.¹³⁴ That this may be achieved above all during the time of formation:

- whenever possible the brother should be present in the formation structure, not merely through cultural and technical formation duties, but above all through responsibilities of formation to the religious and salesian life. Therefore, during the next six years there shall be special care taken to prepare brothers capable of playing a suitable role in such a formation team;
- the salesian priest who takes part in the formation process of the brother should keep in mind the lay characteristics of this specific vocation so as to know how to effectively understand, promote and

¹³⁰ Cf this document n. 281-284.

¹³¹ Cf Reg 82.

¹³² Cf ASGC 688.

¹³³ Cf "Studies and intellectual formation of the salesian," Rome, 5.8.77, n. 94-95.

¹³⁴ Cf ASGC 184.3.

nurture the call which God gives a young man to follow Christ in the consecrated salesian lay state.

306 f) *The post-capitular program*

In the next years the provincial with his council, through the provincial formation committee, shall set up with special care the various elements of a formation program for the salesian brother. These shall be integrated in the provincial Formation Directory.

(e) *These responsibilities for formation*

To be faithful to our founding charism, those in charge of formation should seek to know, and to make better appreciated, our salesian identity in the two-fold dimension of our salesian religious vocation, lay and priestly.¹²⁰ That this may be achieved above all during the time of formation — whenever possible the brother should be present in the formation structure, not merely through cultural and technical formation duties, but above all through responsibilities of formation to the religious and salesian life. Therefore during the next six years there shall be special care taken to prepare brothers capable of playing a suitable role in such a formation team;

(c) *stativocivitas stabilimentum*

— the salesian priest who takes part in the formation process of the brother should keep in mind the lay characteristics of this specific vocation so as to know how to effectively understand, promote and

¹²⁰ Cf this document n. 281-284.

¹²¹ Cf Reg 82.

¹²² Cf ASSC 688.

¹²³ Cf "Studies and intellectual formation of the salesian," *Revista FICV*, n. 4 (1974).

¹²⁴ Cf ASSC 184.

ONGOING FORMATION

1. THE PRESENT SITUATION

The present-day speed of socio-cultural transformation reveals forms of educational and apostolic inadequacy in some salesians and wear and tear on their consecrated life which demonstrate the urgent necessity of personal and community renewal.

As a response to this urgency, and in application of the deliberations of the SGC,¹³⁶ the Superior Council, the provinces, the provincial conferences and the local communities have realized a certain number of initiatives in ongoing formation.¹³⁷

Some of these initiatives and experiences can be considered successful; others have had less satisfying results.

Some causes for these deficiencies are: a lack of development in the way of thinking about the subject on the part of salesians and communities which still retain a static idea of formation, and are still bound to forms of work which leave them interiorly empty; a certain misunderstanding through which ongoing formation is viewed only as cultural updating; insufficient and limited courses; the lack of time for frequenting and for assimilating them; the lack of animators and experts.

For this reason the GC21 considers it necessary to restate this argument systematically.

¹³⁵ RRM 71, 177. "Salesian Formation," document of Formation Dept. 1973, n. 646.

¹³⁶ ASGC 690f, 701: Const 118; Reg 93, 94; "Salesian Formation" n. 313.

¹³⁷ RRM 70, 164, 165, 166; many Acts of Prov Chaps '77; RDF 3,13; 4,2; 5,3.

¹³⁸ RRM 165, 166.

¹³⁹ RRM 70, 166; RDF 5,3.

2. LINES OF REFLECTION

2.1 The concept of ongoing formation

308 Formation is not, or at least is not only, a determined formation structure nor just a momentary step in life. Indeed it is not exhausted through necessary courses of réqualification and of theological, pastoral, and professional updating.

Nor is it a later phase of initial formation which indeed it presupposes.

Ongoing formation is an organizing principle which inspires and orientates formation along the whole arc of life. Formation and personal culture are today conceived more as an indefinite capacity to learn in relation to life than an acquisition of notions. Ongoing formation therefore implies:

- an essential continuity throughout one's whole life of the formative process, of the growth and constructive entry into society of the person;
- an attitude of permanent conversion in discernment of the voice of the "Spirit which renews the face of the earth";
- a personal and community undertaking aimed at constantly renewing one's own dynamic and creative fidelity in the current phase of history according to the ideal of Don Bosco, and at approaching youth with an adequate present-day educational plan.¹⁴⁰

Inasmuch as this is first of all a personal attitude and a general community undertaking, it must not remain a pure state of mind. It involves each individual salesian and the community, and it becomes a concrete entity in specific personal and community actions, in supporting structures, in a climate of salesian animation and of lively community participation.

2.2 Reasons

309 Ongoing formation is necessary for various reasons:

- the dynamic and developing character of the human personality presents a constant opening up, whether on the level of doctrinal synthesis or of the plan of life;

¹⁴⁰ ASGC 659; Const 118.

- the christian life is by its nature a continuous growth in Christ and in watchful attention paid to the Spirit present in the events of history, which we have to decipher and which await from us a response of faith. The Church is itself in a continuing state of renewal;
- the salesian vocation directed to youth, i.e. to the part of humanity which more than every other part is always new and difficult to anticipate, and demands constantly renewed creativity and dynamism.

But today it is for us particularly urgent for the following reasons: 310

- the ever accelerated pace of transformations of the world in which we live influences us in an often disturbing way, and the present questions which demand adequate answers are directed toward us personally;
- under the surge of technical progress, the speed and continuity of information have led to a society and a pluralistic culture in which a constant critical comparison with the foundation of one's chosen plan of life is indispensable;
- these very transformations urge us to continuous renewal so as to maintain an understandable witness and an efficient apostolic service;
- the formation tasks assigned by the SGC to the entire provincial community impose on it the urgency of a spiritual and apostolic recharging, and of a doctrinal updating which renders it truly formative.

2.3 The subject

The subject of continuing formation is first of all the person of the salesian. Nothing will take the place of his duty done freely and with conviction. No one will be able to run the course of renewal for him. The subject of continuing education is moreover the salesian community inasmuch as it is the educator of its members, but also inasmuch as it too needs ongoing formation in fidelity to Don Bosco and of discernment of the Spirit. 311

The salesian community is the subject of ongoing formation in its essential educational relationship towards youth. It is this relationship which acts as a stimulus to renewal, including spiritual renewal, and which offers reasons, criteria of evaluation and indications for updating.

2.4 Objectives

- 312 Objectives of continuing formation are therefore: the renewal of each confrere, the reactualization of his salesian vocation, of his apostolic efficiency, and of his human maturity (an open and critical mind, a sense of responsibility, the ability to communicate and to dialogue, to give one's self, to be creative, etc.).

Ongoing formation proposes to us moreover the renewal of the community itself in its fraternal union, in its capacity of proclaiming and witnessing, in its organic insertion in a unified apostolate.

2.5 Areas of ongoing formation

- 313 Ongoing formation as an endeavor of vital growth involves all aspects of the personality of the salesian, and therefore:

- his spirituality amidst a deepening of faith directed towards continuous conversion and towards the search for fullness in his vocation;
- his salesian identity, hence the religious-apostolic plan of Don Bosco and his pedagogical pastoral method;¹⁴¹
- his theological-pastoral environment, the community dynamics, the present youth situation;
- his professionalism, the new efficient methodologies and the reshaping of mentalities which these imply.

3. PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

314 3.1 Criteria of Organization

The initiatives, structures and programs for actuating ongoing formation give rise to the following criteria:

3.1.1 *Unity and decentralization according to the norms of the Constitutions*¹⁴²

The formative and salesian quality of the initiatives of ongoing formation should be guaranteed with the assistance, the orientation, and the oppor-

¹⁴¹ ASGC 670.

¹⁴² Const 106.

tune decisions of the Superior Council. It will be their task to approve the creation of interprovincial and interregional centers.

The regions and provinces respectively should program execution and local adaptation, and they should assume responsibility according to the current demands of a given situation with due concern for the charismatic patrimony of unity.

3.1.2 *Continuity and gradual development*¹⁴³

Ongoing formation of the salesian ought to develop without interruption, without a break in continuity or the negation of the formation already received. This should be clearly manifest through the doctrinal content of spiritual life it teaches through its method and language and its didactic-pedagogical forms, without being reduced to a pure repetition or amplification of the initial program of formation.

3.1.3 *Its practical and vital character*¹⁴⁴

The protagonist of ongoing formation is a subject placed in a concrete situation of life. His difficulties, his possibilities of growth, his tasks, are all conditioned by his situation. The programming and method of ongoing formation should take this into account, and the goals aimed at should refer especially to that situation.

3.1.4 *"Salesianità"*¹⁴⁵

The salesian vocation should be the unifying and essential theme of ongoing formation, and it should occupy a relevant place within the totality of the contents and perspectives of such formation.

3.2 Responsibility at various levels

3.2.1 *The salesian*

Each confrere, responsible for his own growth and for that of the community in which he lives and works, through a wisely chosen program of life should strengthen or if necessary rebuild his ability and habit of systematic reading and of study in the areas proper to his mission, and also his disposition to personal prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, and the use of the rite of penance.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ ASGC 660, 691.

¹⁴⁴ ASGC 671.

¹⁴⁵ ASGC 660; Const 100.

¹⁴⁶ ASGC 659.

In this duty he will be assisted fraternally by the Congregation through those responsible. They will accompany him in the ordinary duty of growth and will provide indispensable initiatives.

3.2.2 In the ordinary initiatives, the following have a special responsibility:

319 a) The rector

Since the local community is the ordinary place of continuing formation, the person of the rector, his testimony, his action, his mentality have a decisive importance. His task of religious and pastoral animation and of spiritual direction are to be given preference over all other responsibilities in the working out of his service.¹⁴⁷

b) The provincial

It is his task to animate religious life, and to care for the integral and permanent formation of the confreres.¹⁴⁸

For this reason:

- let him support by personal contact the task of renewal of the confreres;
- let him program with his council the activities and initiatives which regard the ongoing formation of the confreres and the training of those who do the educating and animating, especially the rectors;¹⁴⁹
- let him look to the accomplishing of such programs, keeping watch particularly over ordinary local community life.¹⁵⁰

c) Animators and formation personnel

Ongoing formation requires of those persons prepared for this function, at least at the interprovincial level, the possibility of dedicating themselves full time to this work.

d) Qualified salesian personnel

Qualified salesian personnel should hold this service to the confreres as a matter of priority over other occasional additional tasks.

320 3.2.3 Extraordinary initiatives and animation on a wider scale.

a) The Regional Councillors

They are responsible with the provincials concerned for the realization of

¹⁴⁷ ASGC 672; Const 182; Reg 153, 155, 157.

¹⁴⁸ Const 168.

¹⁴⁹ ASGC 690f.

¹⁵⁰ Reg 93.

interprovincial programs of ongoing formation. They should encourage a greater collaboration and coordination between provinces for ongoing formation.

b) *The Councillor for Formation*

He is responsible for and cares for the continuing and integral formation of the salesian.¹⁵¹ In agreement with the respective Regional Councillor, he seeks from the provinces the programming and actualization of practical means for the ongoing formation of the confreres. Let him have special care for the good running of centers for ongoing formation and for houses of spirituality.

c) *The Rector Major*

As father and center of unity, he promotes a continuous and renewed fidelity to the salesian vocation.¹⁵² This implies, among other things, the duty of animating the confreres in their ongoing formation. This he satisfactorily accomplishes through his ordinary government, his teaching office (talks and circular letters), his contacts, visits, and his meetings with groups of persons.¹⁵³

3.3 Structures

3.3.1 In the normative documents on salesian formation (*Ratio Institutionis, Ratio Studiorum, Provincial Directories*) there should be a section on ongoing formation. The section on initial formation should assume ongoing formation as an organizing and orientating principle. 321

3.3.2 The provincial formation committee also sets programs for the continuing formation of salesians, and seeks their realization in dependence on the provincial and his council. 322

3.3.3 Regions, language groups, or provincial conferences should have, if possible and convenient, their center for ongoing formation. Interprovincial initiatives which develop in them are the responsibility of the provincials of the area or of the conference concerned, the Regional Councillor, or the Councillor for Formation. 323

¹⁵¹ Const 139.

¹⁵² ASGC 714, 719; Const 129.

¹⁵³ ASGC 701.

- 324** 3.3.4 The "Salesianum" at Rome should have as one of its specific tasks that of preparing directors and animators for the other regional centers.
- 325** 3.3.5 For courses of ongoing formation of the confreres we can also take advantage of interreligious centers, especially when participation in the pastoral work of the local church would counsel it, and when the presence of salesians in such an arrangement would entail an enriching exchange with other religious.

3.4 Lines of action

326 3.4.1 *At local level*

a) We should give preference to the local community as the place for ongoing formation, avoiding every dichotomy or a sense of discontinuity between profitable pauses and community life. The life of fraternal union and of apostolic work is a continuous occasion of personal development. The community supports this process giving value and enrichment to all times, means, and community aspects which bring us to a greater understanding and deepening of our vocation.¹⁵⁴

Among these we list the following:

- times of community prayer, of shared meditation, of reflection on the gospel and on renewal of one's life; the monthly and quarterly recollection days;
 - moments of participation and coresponsibility (council, assembly, meetings) and of community communication;
 - occasions of salesian enrichment, as the talk with the rector, the conferences,¹⁵⁵ the good nights;
 - communication with the provincial community and with the Congregation through letters read in common and commented upon, through provincial communications, through directives of the Rector Major;
 - participation in things of interest to the Church through personal and community acquaintance with her guidelines.
- 327** b) 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."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Const 100.

¹⁵⁵ Cf Reg 157.

¹⁵⁶ Reg 93.

c) The community must encourage this task of the confrere through fitting means: occasions of exchange on a level of studies, participation in conferences and pastoral encounters, correspondence with the proposals on formation of the local church, study and systematic exercise in communication (training in communication), a functional and up-to-date library, a section of the house reserved for the use of the community so as to favor a climate of recollection, prayer, and personal work.¹⁵⁷

328

d) The local community should also encourage the formation of its confreres by means of encounters for reflection and religious experiences with the young and those others who are the object of our mission.

329

3.4.2 At provincial level

a) Let the provincials and delegates in presenting these capitular documents place in evidence the importance of ongoing formation. The provincial formation committee should then continue the work with suitable reminders.

330

b) Ordinary means and occasions on the provincial level are meetings of rectors, economers, pastoral animators, and other confreres. In these meetings, besides dealing with the administrative and organizational aspects of things, concern should be shown for the religious life and spiritual and doctrinal programs for the salesians.

331

c) The annual retreats have particular efficacy in promoting personal growth and province-wide union. They gain in value through previous preparation of the confreres, updating of the forms of retreat, and the updating also of the animators.

332

d) Let the province also promote short encounters, according to its possibilities, to foster ongoing formation (e.g. on biblical, catechetical or pastoral themes, and on religious life, salesianity, etc.).

333

e) The province will take particular care of members who are in the early years of their priestly ministry: as well as the ordinary pastoral care, it will provide for further preparation in those matters which are peculiarly necessary for the salesian priest: catechetics, pastoral work for youth, etc. Similar provision will be made for brothers in the early years of their full involvement in pastoral work.

334

¹⁵⁷ Reg 39.

- 335 f) After their perpetual profession, let all salesians be offered periodically a period of reasonable length for the renewal of their pastoral and religious life. Let the provinces keep this in mind when drawing up their programs. Let each confrere respond generously to this requirement of formation for his own good as well as that of the community.
- 336 g) In the coming six years let priority be given to the theme of "salesianità" and to the study of the Constitutions.
- 337 h) In the next three years let each province or group of provinces provide for the preparation of experts in salesianity, making use of the services offered by the UPS.
- 338 i) Ongoing formation will entail the reshaping of our works and activities as a matter of controlled growth. The GC21 emphasizes the need to apply the criteria for reshaping set out by the SGC also to the need for providing for the ongoing formation of the confreres.

3.4.3 At regional and world level

- 339 a) In the next three years let lengthy courses be provided at the "Salesianum," Rome, for directors and animators of regional centers for ongoing formation.
- 340 b) Periodically the Superior Council will organize projects to provide the specific qualification needed by provincials to enable them to fulfil their role of animators of the provincial communities.
- 341 c) The necessary qualification of rectors will be achieved through interprovincial initiatives, promoted at least every three years and coordinated by the provincial conference or by the Regional Councillor with the provincials concerned.
- 342 d) Provincial conferences or linguistic groups 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.