

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 FORMATION OF FORMATION GUIDES

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“Formation,” said St John Paul II in *Vita Consecrata*, “is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women.” (VC 66) While the Father is “the educator par excellence,” and while the prime responsibility for the response falls on the one who is called, it has pleased the Father, in the work of formation, to make use of human instruments, “placing more mature brothers and sisters at the side of those whom he calls.” (VC 66)

The present guidelines would like to focus not so much on the formees as on the persons of the formation guides, in the light of the journey of the congregation since the Second Vatican Council: the awareness of the mission as setting the tenor of our life, of formation as a lifelong process, of the educative-pastoral community as the subject of the mission that we share with so many lay people and members of the Salesian Family, and of the role of the religious community within it; and, in recent General Chapters, the attention to our identity as Salesian consecrated persons living out our vocation in two forms, lay and clerical.

1. Preparing formation guides and not just teachers

The recognition of the need for formation of formation guides is not absent from the magisterium of the Congregation, beginning from R 78 which reads: “formation communities must have a rector and a team of formation personnel who are specially prepared, above all as regards spiritual direction...” In the wake of *Potissimum institutioni* (1990), *Pastores dabo vobis* (1992), *Direc-*

tives on the preparation of educators in seminaries (1993), *Vita consecrata* (1996), and perhaps also *Inter-institute collaboration for formation*, (1998), the third edition of our *Ratio* (2000) takes up the theme of formation of formators and repeats it in various ways.¹ As the *Directives* of 1993 say, common sense alone is not enough: what is needed is a capacity for *discernment* that has been sharpened and refined by a good knowledge of the human sciences so as to be able to go beyond appearances and “to help the seminarian to know himself in depth, accept himself with serenity and to correct himself and to mature....”² The same document distinguished helpfully between an *initial phase* and a *successive phase* in the formation of formation guides (48-71), and *Vita consecrata* insisted on “appropriate *structures* for the training of those responsible for formation,” with the note that these be “preferably in places where they can be in contact with the *culture* in which their pastoral service will later be carried out.” (VC 66)

In a significant letter of 2009 entitled “Formation of formation guides in initial formation,” the councillor for formation, Fr Francesco Cereda, spoke of the need for careful selection and formation of formators, described the tasks of formators (helping transformation, accompanying, fostering primacy of the spiritual life, communicating Don Bosco’s charism, working as a team), and listed the various occasions for such formation at the personal, local, provincial, regional and world level.³ The same guidelines were repeated in the *Assessment and Guidelines concerning Intellectual Formation during Initial Formation*.⁴

¹ See *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (online edition 2016) ## 237-239, 246, 284-286, 416, 489, 547-548, 571. Still, there is no section of our *Ratio* dedicated entirely to the formation of formation guides, and this is significant.

² Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives concerning the preparation of seminary educators* (1993) 57 (see *Origins: CNS Documentary Service* 23/32 [27 January 1994] 558-571, at <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/vocations/priesthood/priestly-formation/upload/preparation.pdf> as of 11 February 2017. See FSDB (2016) 237.

³ F. Cereda, “Formation of formation guides in initial formation,” AGC 404 (2009) 77-81 (section 4).

⁴ *Valutazione e orientamenti circa la formazione intellettuale nella formazione iniziale. Valutazione e orientamenti approvati dal Rettor Maggiore e dal Consiglio generale*, Roma 25 luglio 2012.

The letter candidly admitted that “nowadays in the Congregation most of the formation guides have not received and currently are not receiving any or scarcely any specific preparation for formation. Often the Provinces prepare formation guides by getting them to obtain a degree in some particular field of study; this sort of qualification is necessary for the culture of the formation guide and as preparation for his teaching role, but it is not sufficient for his formation task.”⁵ Some ten years down the line, the situation remains largely unchanged. In “Vocation and Formation,” Fr Pascual Chávez noted that the congregation needs “to prepare formation personnel and not just teachers.”⁶ We might say that the preparation of guides for formation *has not yet become a systematic reality in the congregation.*

2. The model of formation

The goal sets the path, and so the formation of formation guides depends very much on the goal, on the kind of formation for which we want to prepare guides. The goal of formation to *consecrated life* proposed in *Vita consecrata* is neither mere external conformity, nor even a set of attitudes and competences, but rather the high one of “putting on the sentiments (*phronein*) of Christ” (Phil 2,5) – or configuration to Christ, putting on Christ (Rom 13,14), letting Christ be formed in us (Gal 4,19), sharing the Son’s total self-giving to the Father and to his brothers and sisters, becoming a living memorial of him to the point of sharing even his concrete life choices (VC 66, 22).

The goal of *Salesian* formation, we could add, is configuration to Christ the *Good Shepherd* in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

Now an authentic educational goal must be capable of transforming itself into a method. What are the operative consequences of the goal of “putting on the sentiments of Christ”?

⁵ Cereda, AGC 404:75-76 (section 3).

⁶ P Chávez, “Vocation and Formation,” AGC 416 (2013) 10.

We insist again that formation is first and foremost the work of God. It is the Father who calls and who, through the Spirit, forms the inner attitudes of the Son in the heart of young people. But since God is utterly respectful of our freedom, formation, far from being a “one way” affair, involves our responding to the call of God. Formation therefore involves a dynamic of call and response, a dialectic of two freedoms and two loves. It is a divine work in which we are called to collaborate. This, in fact, is how our Constitutions see formation: as response to vocation. (C 96)

Formation guides take their place within the dynamic of call and response that is the formation process.

A first point that follows from this is that formation involves a *dynamic of freedom*. “If we must form the ‘heart’ in the biblical and full sense of the term, so that the young person might have the attitudes of Christ and discover the beauty of the *sequela*, the process of education has to be a *formation to freedom* (VC 66).”⁷ Grace influences our freedom but never takes it away – not even the most powerful grace. Because grace is love, and freedom is a constitutive element of love: without freedom there is no loving and no possibility of a loving response to love.

If the goal of formation were preparation for a certain kind of apostolate or a certain style of life, or the possession of certain virtuous qualities in view of the ministry, the pedagogical methodology could be different (e.g., the strengthening of the will, the capacity for ascesis and renunciation, preparation for the apostolate), but if it is formation of the heart so that the young person has the attitudes of the Son, the only possible way is the way of freedom. The heart of man can and must be educated and evangelized, purified and liberated with all the suffering that this involves, to the point of experiencing those attitudes always more naturally and almost connaturally, thanks to a wise discipline. There is no authentic education to

⁷ A. Cencini, “La formazione oggi: Ministero e mistero,” at http://www.ofmconv.org/x/CENCINI.htm#N_13_ (as of 11 February 2017).

consecration to the kingdom that does not pass through the phases, negative and positive, ascetical and mystical, of a formation to freedom, to freedom – in concrete – as awareness of one’s own internal conditioning, even unconscious, and the ability to be ever less dependent (freedom ‘from’); freedom as a gift received from God in Christ and continually revitalized by the gift of the sacraments and of the new life in Christ (freedom ‘in’) and freedom as the richness of the interior life and of love for God, as the consequent quality of desires and the strength to pursue them (“freedom ‘for’”).⁸

The climate of true freedom enables the young Salesian in formation to overcome inner resistance and fear, become aware of the many levels of his own deep motivations, and find the courage to express them to himself and to his guides. The external acts marking the journey of Salesian life – first profession and renewal of vows – will thus be ever more in harmony with the interiority of the person.

Education to freedom should therefore be “the” method of the process of formation to consecration. In fact, if the Preventive System can be described as a pedagogy of freedom, we could say that the Preventive System is, in fact, “the” method of formation.⁹ In this context we can recall the now famous conversation of Pope Francis with the Superiors General in 2013:

Problems are not solved simply by forbidding doing this or that. Dialogue as well as confrontation are needed. To avoid problems, in some houses of formation, young people grit their teeth, try not to make mistakes, follow the rules smiling a lot, just waiting for the day when they are told: ‘Good. You have finished formation.’ This is hypocrisy that is the result of clericalism, which is one of the worst evils.... I summarize by some advice that I once received as a young man: ‘If you want to ad-

⁸ Cencini.

⁹ C 104 asks that formation guides be capable, among other things, “of genuine dialogue with the young confreres.” C 112 speaks of the director of novices as one who is “able to relate to other people, to engage in dialogue, and to inspire confidence in the novices by his kindness.”

vance, think clearly and speak obscurely.’ That was a clear invitation to hypocrisy. We need to avoid that at all costs.¹⁰

Second, formation involves a dynamic of *attention to experience*. Our Constitutions teach us that formation is a question of “learning by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation.” (C 98) If God is at work in us forming in our hearts the attitudes of the Son, the more attentive we are to this work, the better we can respond to it and collaborate with it. A good guide knows how to direct the attention of the formee to the working of God in his life, helping him to learn a permanent attitude of discernment (*docibilitas*) that allows him to see every experience as an opportunity for growth and for formation. This is the basis of all that our Constitutions have to say about formation – but since we already have a substantial reflection in AGC 425 on formation as lifelong, we will not dwell further on this point.¹¹

Third comes the dynamic of beauty, the *via pulchritudinis*. (EG 15, 167) The situating of formation in the bosom of the Trinity makes consecrated life participate in the beauty of God himself. In the Apostolic Exhortation of 1996, beauty becomes a key to the reading of consecrated life. Vocation ministry and formation must know how to communicate the beauty of the *sequela*. (VC 64, 66) The young person must be formed to see and taste the beautiful (and not merely the holy and the dutiful) – the beauty, attractiveness and splendour of the Lord who calls and of the life to which he calls. And then it is by the beauty of their own lives that formation guides radiate their influence. This is the whole dynamic of example, witness, testimony. As the young Don Bosco learnt at the school of Don Cafasso, fire can be lit only by fire.¹² The beauty of our lives communicates the joy of the gospel: this is a great element in the teaching of Pope Francis, and with him we recall that

¹⁰ Pope Francis with Antonio Spadaro, “Wake up the World. Conversation with Pope Francis about the Religious Life,” 8, at http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/PopeFrancis/Wake_up_the_world-2.pdf (see *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2014 I 3-17).

¹¹ See I. Coelho, “Formation is lifelong,” AGC 425 (2017) 25-37.

¹² Giuseppe Cafasso, *Esercizi spirituali al clero*. I: Meditazioni, 641-642.

this must be especially true of consecrated persons, and even more so of those entrusted with the ministry of formation.

So the goal of Salesian formation – configuration to Christ the Good Shepherd – transforms itself into a method, a method that involves a dynamic of freedom, learning by experience, and beauty. And it is this goal and this method that will guide the preparation of formation personnel.

Two other points. We must avoid the assumption – so natural to modernity with its culture of the atomic individual – that formation is an exclusively one-to-one process. The subject of formation is the community, and this is absolutely as it should be, for us who believe that God is a communion of persons, and that formation is a profoundly Trinitarian process in which we are called to collaborate. It is very significant that all the recent church documents insist on the unity of the formation team,¹³ and this is perhaps the intention behind the insistence of Fr Cereda that the crucial role of personal spiritual guidance should not in any way minimize the need for a team of formation guides.¹⁴ It is within the context of the community and a harmonious formation team that the indispensable moment of the friendly chat and personal spiritual accompaniment takes its place. In the context of formation to priesthood, in fact, the new *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* insists that the journey “has an eminently communitarian character from the outset.”¹⁵

For us Salesian religious, the community is an *essential* part of our identity (C 3).

The mission is entrusted to the community and not to individuals (C 44), and this holds true also for the most delicate task of formation. Without a healthy formative environment, the work of even the most brilliant individual formation guide is ruined. This calls to be translated into much attention to the *formation of the*

¹³ See, for example, OT 5; PI 32; PDV 66; *Directives* (1993) 29-32.

¹⁴ Cereda, AGC 404 67.

¹⁵ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Rome 2016) Introduction section 3.

formation teams at all levels, from the world and provincial to the local.

This might be the place to draw attention again to the expanding meaning of community for us. The Salesian religious community is part of the animating nucleus of the *educative-pastoral community* and of all those who share the mission of Don Bosco, members of the Salesian Family as well as lay mission partners. This conviction and the associated praxis has not entered in the same way in different parts of the congregation – and so it becomes even more urgent to work out and integrate it into the praxis of formation, building up convictions, processing pastoral-educative experiences of collaboration, and programming moments of formation together with our lay mission partners.

We might insist here also on the *specificity* that consecrated life brings to our vocation. Too long we have been content to think of formation to priesthood and to religious life as “quite similar.” Instead, the diocesan priesthood and the religious priesthood are two different states of life within the Church. “Unlike the ordained ministry that has an institutional consistency that transcends the person of the minister, so that it remains valid even if the minister is unworthy, consecrated life consists entirely in the quality of the loving response of those who live it.”¹⁶ This difference has a decisive impact on how the process of conformation to Christ and growth in holiness are realized in each vocation.” Neglect of what is typical of our primary identity as religious leads to a genericism in formation and in the living out of our consecration that is, unfortunately, all too common. One of the great tasks before us is to work out in practical terms how to be formation guides for Salesian religious who are also priests.

¹⁶ Andrea Bozzolo, “Salesiano prete e salesiano coadiutore. Spunti per un’interpretazione teologica,” *Sapientiam dedit illi. Studi su don Bosco e sul carisma salesiano* (Rome, 2015) 335.

3. Practical considerations regarding the formation of formation guides

a) At the very outset, we need to acknowledge the great diversity, as far as initial formation is concerned, in the different regions of the Congregation. We have, for example, many “classical” formation houses, but there is also a growing number of smaller houses that often bring together different phases of formation under one roof. With shrinking numbers and resources, several regions are, at the present moment, engaged in a serious if difficult re-organization of their formation houses. In this context, there is often the fear, on the part of provinces, of “being left with no formation houses.” This last is, of course, not quite true, because almost every province has its own prenovitiate, and then all provinces have the phase of practical training – a most important formation phase that cannot be forgotten or overlooked. Besides, since formation is something that lasts all our lives, every local director is a formator and custodian of the charism. No province, therefore, can absolve itself of the need to prepare formators. It is in this light that we have recently asked all provinces to draw up a qualification plan to prepare confreres in the key areas touching our charism and for the task of formation.

b) There is need to promote a conviction regarding the formation of formation guides. Such formation has to become a mentality, a culture, if it is to become systematic. Certainly provincials and formation delegates have a key role to play. But not less important is the conviction on the part of those entrusted with the work of formation – and here, as we have said before, we must not forget directors of communities with practical trainees and, indeed, all directors of local communities.

c) *Basic components.* If formation guides are to help formees put on Christ, they themselves need to become true images of Christ. And if our specific vocation in the Church is to follow Christ as Salesian consecrated priests and brothers, guides will need to take care of their own growth as human beings into Christ, in the way of Don Bosco, and as consecrated persons.

In such formation of formation guides we could distinguish three areas: contents, skills, and the person of the guide.

As far as *contents* are concerned, we could presume that most formation guides have a sound basic philosophical and theological formation, but we will need to insist on a good grounding in the Salesian charism. Further, the UPS offers various possibilities for a sound theoretical and methodological basis along with the learning of useful methods and skills, both in the Faculty of the Sciences of Education and of Theology.

As far as *skills* and capacities are concerned, we have good courses, both in our own University and elsewhere. Courses that help develop and hone skills in listening, feedback, accompaniment, etc. are precious for a formation guide.

d) But above all we need attention to the *person of the formation guide*. The *Directives* of 1993 calls for a time "of prolonged formation and of radical review of formational topics" and adds:

The scope of such periods of formation is *to favor an accurate examination of the very personality of the educator*, his ministerial commitment, and his way of understanding and living his own mission of formation.

Periods of formation of this kind should include well chosen and appropriately planned courses, be it in the field of ecclesiastical or of the human sciences, *joined with practical exercises carried out with the help of a supervisor and submitted to him for attentive critical review*. In this way the educator will be able to become more actively conscious of his own capacities and attitudes, accept more serenely his own limits, and update and improve the criteria which inspire his action.

In programs of continuing formation of this magnitude, *prolonged periods of spiritual renewal should be planned* (Ignatian months, spiritual exercises, times of solitude) to allow the educator to review his own mission in its most profound spiritual and theological connections and roots.¹⁷

¹⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Directives concerning the Preparation of Seminary Educators* (1993) 70-71.

We have several precious elements here: a processing of the experience of the personal, pastoral and formation experience of the formation guide; supervised practical exercises; periods of spiritual renewal.

We might insist especially on the area of emotional and psychological growth. Formation guides need to learn to recognize and handle their emotions, by working through their own problems, inconsistencies, self-defeating behaviours and immature sexual tendencies, while at the same time enhancing their strengths and competencies.

There are few things so life-giving as contact with a formation guide who is healthy and free. Once again here we have the dynamic of beauty: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses,” said Blessed Paul VI (EN 41). On the other hand, a guide who is not well integrated can do immense harm to formees. Favouritism, possessiveness, rivalry, taking revenge, seeking sexual favours can leave scars in formees that can last a lifetime.¹⁸ It might be a good exercise for formation guides to monitor themselves against the fifteen illnesses listed by Pope Francis to the Roman Curia in his Christmas Message of 2014.¹⁹ As guides become healthy, integrated and free persons, they will become “bridges not obstacles” (PDV 43) for formees on their journey to God.

Our own tradition has always insisted upon adequate *pastoral experience* (C 104), and this is wonderful, provided the formation guide has been helped to process these experiences, to “learn by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation.” (C 98) Mission, as Fr Chavez said, is the “casa” and the “causa” of formation.

¹⁸ See Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Preparatory Document* (2017) III.2: People of Reference.

¹⁹ Francis, “The Roman Curia and the Body of Christ,” Presentation of the Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2014, at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141222_curia-romana.html (19.06.17).

‘Immersed in the world and in the cares of the pastoral life, the Salesian *learns* to meet God through those to whom he is sent’ (C 95). Formation consists fundamentally and primarily in this learning process. The goal is to meet God in the life we are living as we respond to the call.... Wherever an awareness of our doing in God’s sight whatever He has entrusted to us is lacking, there cannot be any real formation no matter how much one studies nor however many years are spent in the so-called ‘houses and stages of formation’.²⁰

It is easy to see that the most difficult and risky component in the formation of the formator is his own personal growth, and here formators need to find in themselves the willingness to engage and invest in such growth.

e) *Formation guides need to master the Preventive System as a pedagogy of freedom.* Especially in cultures where hierarchy and authority are important, formation teams will need to become aware of their operative model of formation and take steps to change, so that formation might truly touch the heart rather than merely (and often only temporarily) influence behaviour.

In this context, the period of *practical training* – which, from the Salesian point of view is the most characteristic phase of initial formation (FSDB 428) – is equally an extremely significant moment in the specific if remote preparation of formation guides. One who has not sufficiently attained the objectives of this phase, especially in terms of knowledge and practice of the Preventive System (C 115), will hardly be able to be a good Salesian formation guide.

One of the elements in the formation of formation guides will therefore be a processing of one’s own experience of practical training, revisiting the *overall assessment* called for by FSDB 444 (“*At the end of practical training, there should be an overall assessment of the whole experience carried out by the Provincial, the community and the confrere himself.*”) It would help, obviously, if this assessment were to be written and archived – and here is

²⁰ Chávez, “Vocation and Formation,” AGC 416 27.

something the various provincial and regional formation commissions can look into. Such an assessment would be the first element to be taken into consideration in the selection of formation guides.

Every attempt to “fast track” practical training – either in the hurry to “be ordained” or else to “privilege” some particularly brilliant confrere – is to be strenuously resisted.

Clearly, also, the directors of communities blessed with practical trainees are formation guides of the very first category, and all that we have been saying must be applied without fail to them: they need to be formation guides who have been prepared for their task. Provincials have a sacred responsibility in this regard, as also to ensure that the communities receiving practical trainees are themselves sane and healthy formation environments.

All this applies analogously also to the *quinquennium*, both for priests and for Brothers.

f) In our increasingly multicultural societies and communities, formation guides need to process their own attitudes to cultural differences, so as to be able to promote formation to interculturality. As *New Wine in New Wineskins* says: “The goal of consecrated life cannot be that of maintaining itself as a permanent state in the different cultures it encounters, but that of maintaining permanently the evangelical conversion at the heart of the progressive construction of a new intercultural human reality.”²¹ Interprovincial or international structures for the formation of candidates call for formators who are truly convinced that

‘Christianity does not have simply one cultural expression, but rather, “remaining completely true to itself, with unswerving fidelity to the proclamation of the Gospel and the tradition of the Church, it will also reflect the different faces of the cultures and people in which it is received and takes root”.’ This involves the capacity and the humility to not impose a single cultural system but to fecundate every culture with the seed of

²¹ Congregation for Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life, *New Wine in New Wineskins* (2017) 40.

the Gospel and of one's charismatic tradition, carefully avoiding 'a needless hallowing of our own culture.' (*New Wine* 37)

But the concrete way passes also through the person of the formator: when a formator has a certain inner strength, and if he has taken the trouble to process his reactions to the different and to the other, he will be in possession of a bridge to the experience of the other.

g) Given that we – and especially our younger confreres – live in a new media age, where technology is visibly creating and generating culture, formation guides need to be able to understand and relate to formees who are citizens of the digital continent.

h) *The “remote preparation” of Salesian formators, we could say, consists of the whole of initial formation, especially a good experience of practical training, and 2-3 years of accompanied pastoral experience during the quinquennium. The minimum package for the “proximate preparation,” instead, could consist of (1) a short course touching the person of the formator; (2) a short course on Salesian matters, including the processing of one's pastoral-educative experience during practical training and the quinquennium, and a working knowledge of the FSDB; and (3) a short course for the acquisition of basic skills such as listening, feedback, and processing. For directors, novice masters and prenovice directors, we could add (4) a serious course preparing the person for the ministry of spiritual accompaniment.*

While the formation of formators does not necessarily involve licentiate or doctorate, the licentiates in formation of formators in the Faculties of the Sciences of Education and of Theology remain valid offerings. Highly appreciated by an increasing number of religious as well as diocesan clergy is the semester-long course at the UPS for the ongoing formation of formators.

i) As far as *Salesianity* is concerned, we have the shorter courses in our various centres for ongoing formation (Quito, Paranaque - Manila, Berkeley, Bangalore), and the more substantial courses at the UPS in the Faculty of Theology.

While all formation guides require at least a short course in Salesianity, we must insist that every province would do well to prepare one or two experts in Salesianity with a licentiate or doctorate from the UPS.

j) *The formation of spiritual guides* is one of the great tasks before the congregation, as the Rector Major says in his Strenna for 2018: “Let us cultivate the art of listening and of accompaniment,”²² very much in line with the journey of the Church towards the synod on “Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.” The first and indispensable element in such formation is the formation guide’s own access to spiritual direction.²³ A practical course on spiritual accompaniment will enhance what one has already learnt personally in this way. Besides the opportunities available in various places in the Church, and also some within the congregation (Spain, Quito, Bangalore), we also intend to set up a Salesian School of Accompaniment²⁴ as one of the fruits of the seminar on Salesian spiritual accompaniment jointly conducted by the sectors of Youth Ministry and Formation.

k) Besides the courses mentioned above, there are also various initiatives for the ongoing formation of formation guides at the provincial, regional and world levels. Useful as they are, however, they cannot be considered to substitute or obviate the need for an initial formation of formation guides (see PDV 66).

l) I invite provincial and regional formation commissions to offer us reflections and suggestions on various elements in the present guidelines, as, for example, (1) how to form Salesian religious who are also priests, (2) how the pastoral experience of practical training and of the quinquennium might become an integral element in the preparation of formation guides, (3) how to make the shared mission with the laity and with the Salesian Family,

²² Ángel Fernández Artime, “‘Sir, give me this water’ (Jn 4,15). Let us cultivate the art of listening and of accompaniment. Presentation of the Strenna 2018,” Rome, 16 July 2017.

²³ Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* (new ed. 2013) 73.

²⁴ See Cereda AGC 404 77-81 (section 4).

and especially the educative-pastoral community, an integral element in initial formation.

m) Finally, we can expect a change of policy: no appointment of formation guides without prior and specific formation; a modification of the forms for the appointment of rectors (especially of formation communities) and novice masters (F19 and F20) in this sense; and the introduction of a new form for the appointment of those in charge of prenovices.

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When the newly ordained John Bosco went to Fr Cafasso to seek his advice about the options at hand for his priestly ministry (assistant Parish Priest at Castelnuovo, chaplain at Murialdo, tutor for the children of a noble family in Genoa), Fr Cafasso told him – but at the end of a set of encounters that I find remarkable for their attention to inner experience – to set aside these offers and come to the Convitto for three more years of formation. These years turned out to be crucial: they made Don Bosco what he was, they were the ground and basis of all that he did.

To invest in formation for our Congregation is the holiest and most effective way to invest our resources, and it is deeply imbedded in our charism. This is the message we offer to the world and to the Church when we dedicate our lives and our resources to the formation of the young. This is what we do when we invest in the formation of those who will take care of the new generations of Salesians.

“The good that we are doing – we will never know how much good it is doing.” These words of our Father become even more significant when the good in question is the accompaniment of an aspirant, a prenovice, a novice, a young confrere. An unlimited potential is here entrusted to us. We cannot but give to it the best of ourselves as confreres, provinces, congregation.