

FOURTH SECTION

**Our formation**

**Document 13**

FORMATION FOR  
SALESIAN WAY OF LIFE



## 1. The Present Situation

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The rapid evolution of society, which often happens in a disorderly fashion, together with the ensuing change of mentalities and of structures, makes a profound impression on the formation of candidates to the salesian life, and on salesians themselves. The young men in formation some more some less reflect the situation and problems of the world today.<sup>1</sup>

In general the climate in our houses of formation is much the same as that prevailing in the majority of similar institutions: we find a spirit of generosity, sincerity, authenticity, awareness of the needs of the contemporary world, eagerness for freedom, fear of being psychologically conditioned by houses of formation, intolerance of rules and of any authority that is not fraternal, thirsting for experiences and yet fearful of being cut off from life, hesitation to become involved in ties that bind too far into the future, lack of an authentic apostolic mystique, which provokes, as a reaction, an activism that often ignores or fails to understand recollection, silence, prayer; little appreciation for study that is not regarded as '*pastoral.*'<sup>2</sup>

Hence it is not easy for those responsible for formation to fulfil their delicate task. It becomes more difficult when there is no continuous atmosphere of family spirit reigning between confrères in formation and those

<sup>1</sup> Cf *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*: Intro. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf op. cit., p 63.

responsible for formation, and when differences of opinion and ways of acting increase and divide the members of the staff themselves.

These and other difficulties, not always successfully overcome, lead to the following consequences: the number of confrères, especially the young, who leave the Congregation, increases.<sup>3</sup> The number of novices is very much reduced in these last years.<sup>4</sup> There are young men who do not find sufficient motivation to make up their minds to enter the Congregation. Candidates for the aspirantates in many provinces have dropped considerably in number.<sup>5</sup> Some have been closed.<sup>6</sup>

Though well aware of this alarming situation of world proportions which intimately concerns the very life of the Congregation, the Special General Chapter with an optimistic eye considers what has been done, and fosters the hope of resolving these problems positively, relying on the good will of all, both of young men and of those responsible for formation.

## 2. Scope of this document

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As a help to the solution of the important problem of formation, the Special General Chapter does not propose to produce a general theoretical tract on human, christian, religious and priestly formation. It merely wishes to give the general outlines of a salesian '*Ratio Institutionis*,' which can be developed by the various provinces in agreement with the norms of the local churches and the needs of the various countries. Hence it merely indicates guidelines which, in the field of formation, allow for applications corresponding to the needs of our times, in fidelity to

<sup>3</sup> Cf op. cit., pp 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Cf op. cit., p 56.

<sup>5</sup> Cf op. cit., p 43.

<sup>6</sup> Cf op. cit., p 62.



Christ, to the Church and to the genuine mind of Don Bosco.<sup>7</sup>

In this task, the Special General Chapter has taken as its starting point the difficulties, the needs and the aspirations that the confrères expressed through the *Special Provincial Chapters* and the replies to '*Problems and Possibilities.*' Throughout the whole treatment of the topic of formation, it has tried to bear in mind and answer these vital questions raised by the Congregation. It has studied both Vatican II and the post-conciliar documents. It has wanted to be faithful to the mind of Don Bosco. These are its central terms of reference.

### **3. Importance of formation**

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The importance of formation is fundamental. On it depends, to a large extent, the personal realization of every salesian and the unity of spirit of the whole Congregation. It has a decisive incidence on renewal because 'the suitable renewal of religious communities depends very largely on the training of their members.'<sup>8</sup>

It directly regards the personnel in formation, but also whatever affects and concerns all the confrères, for each one at his own level is engaged in a process both of continuous personal adaptation to the requirements of our mission and of continuous spiritual growth, and is also responsible for the vital communication of the salesian mission and spirit by means of his own witness.

### **4. Formation centered on the salesian religious vocation**

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Throughout the entire period of formation the common elements and the basic principles of the salesian religious life will be stressed in a really meaningful and

<sup>7</sup> Cf RC Intro.

<sup>8</sup> PC 18.

coherent way. In fact both the brothers and the future priests, each in his own way <sup>9</sup> all share in a full and identical manner *in the same salesian religious vocation*.

However, fidelity to this common vocation ought not to prevent the states proper to the brother and to the priest from being safeguarded.

In this document more insistence will be given to formation to the common salesian vocation. However we must not forget that whilst for the candidate to the priestly life the Congregation is called above all to re-structure or, better, to improve the formation curriculum already laid down for the most part by the Church; *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.

<sup>9</sup> Cf LG 43.

## GENERAL ASPECTS OF FORMATION

- 661 1. *Every man receives from God, in a personal way, the invitation to make his own being an historical, free and responsible response to his creative and saving act.*<sup>1</sup>

Every vocation, as a manifestation of the incalculable richness of God, ought to be profoundly esteemed and cultivated with the greatest care.<sup>2</sup>

All Christians, in virtue of their baptism and confirmation, share in the priestly,<sup>3</sup> prophetic<sup>4</sup> and royal role<sup>5</sup> of Christ.<sup>6</sup> To each one of them the Father confides a particular task in the Church of Christ, which corresponds to a vocation in the midst of the People of God.

- 662 2. *The Christian, by means of an authentic education in the faith, perceives in the everyday reality of his life, read in the light of the gospel, his own specific vocation in the Church.*

Hence the essential of pastoral care of vocations is an authentic christian education,<sup>7</sup> which enables the young men to perceive in their ordinary lives, understood in the light of the faith, their own specific vocation in the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Cf PP 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf *Relazione* op. cit., p 6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf LG 10, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Cf LG 12.

<sup>5</sup> Cf PO 2.

<sup>6</sup> RF 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cf OT 2.

Our Society, which has received the specific mission of evangelizing youth, is called to realize this vocation work within the Church. In a particular way, it has the mission of helping youth to define their own position and to discover their own roles in the human community and in the Church.

Salesians should take special care to help in the formation of those whom the Lord has called to a total consecration to himself for an apostolic mission.<sup>8</sup> Provided that a young man finds it with the right conditions and assistance,<sup>9</sup> the following can be suitable and sufficient environments to foster the attainment of the level of vocational maturity required for entry to the novitiate: the family, the school, associations, and youth groups of a formative and apostolic character.<sup>10</sup> The aspirantate, as an environment characterized by an intense vocational orientation, is still a valid form to help youth discover their own vocation and consciously correspond with it.

Vocation orientation, whilst it achieves the fundamental aim of helping all boys to discover and develop their own vocation, will still be the natural source of new members for the Congregation.

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3. *The candidate to the salesian life and the salesian in formation, seek in the Church a sure way and a stimulus for the up-to-date development of their vocation.*

The basic guide-line of the Church on the formation of religious is that each institute must maintain and dynamically develop in its members, according to its particular character, the authentic spirit of its Founder in line with its mission.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Cf PC 24; RF 7.

<sup>9</sup> Cf RC 5.

<sup>10</sup> Cf OT 2.

<sup>11</sup> Cf PC 2; RC Intr.

These and other guide-lines given by the Church, above all n. 18 of *Perfectae Caritatis*, are to be borne in mind and applied in the formation of salesian religious.<sup>12</sup>

664 4. *The candidates to the salesian life and the salesian in formation achieve their christian and religious development following the supreme law of the gospel.*<sup>13</sup>

To follow Christ and imitate him is the fundamental obligation of all the baptized, since it is through baptism that they share in the very life of Christ.<sup>14</sup> To follow Jesus more closely and to imitate him more perfectly is a choice made by those baptized persons, viz. religious, who have received from God the special charism of the religious vocation. This vocation is realized in a total offering of themselves for a specific mission of service to men for the good of the Church; it does not represent an exceptional gesture at all but is the constant rule of their lives, lived not only *affectively* but also *effectively*, i.e. in concrete and habitual forms of life.<sup>15</sup>

The young salesian, a product of the times in which he lives and works, must answer this specific call of God. It is the task of his formation to help him in this complete gift of himself to God by following and imitating Christ. To achieve this, his formation must be centred on the person and mystery of Christ, and founded on the mystery of the Church and a living experience of faith.<sup>16</sup> It must be carried out in a spirit of prayer and nourished at the genuine sources of christian spirituality: — the sacred scriptures and the liturgy, and above all the mys-

<sup>12</sup> Cf PC 18; RM ES OT RF; Ratio delle varie conferenze Episcopali Nazionali.

<sup>13</sup> Cf PC 2 b.

<sup>14</sup> Cf Rom 6, 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Cf *Per una presenza viva dei religiosi nella Chiesa e nel mondo*, LDC pp 227-228.

<sup>16</sup> Cf SC 9.

tery of the eucharist,<sup>17</sup> the fount and apex of the christian life.<sup>18</sup> Mary, most holy, ought also to be presented in the mystery of the word incarnate and of the Church<sup>19</sup> and in her role of Help of Christians.<sup>20</sup>

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5. *The candidate to the salesian life and the salesian in formation achieve their personal development taking into account the concrete situation of the present world with its needs, since they live and act in it as men, as christians and as salesians.*

The sum total of the needs and aspirations of our age strongly influences every true formation.<sup>21</sup>

Don Bosco had to a very high degree a sense of awareness of the needs of the times: in view of this he mapped out the salesian Society and knew how to adapt it to the social and spiritual aspirations of his times. His first collaborators were formed in this spirit. Today it is a matter of urgency to revitalize this characteristic, especially in the sphere of formation.

Like Don Bosco, the salesian must be able to read the signs of the times. Modern society, with its rapid and profound changes, demands a new type of man,<sup>22</sup> capable of overcoming the uneasiness caused by changes, and of continuing to look for solutions rather than take refuge in ready-made answers; disposed to learn and to face up to new situations, to enter into dialogue with an open mind, to accept the fact of inter-dependence and to practise solidarity; capable too of distinguishing what is permanent from what is changeable, without going to

<sup>17</sup> Cf PC 6; ET 47.

<sup>18</sup> Cf UR 15.

<sup>19</sup> Cf LG 54.

<sup>20</sup> Cf LG 62-67; PeP, ist 181.

<sup>21</sup> Cf GS 4-10.

<sup>22</sup> Cf RF 2.

extremes; and capable finally of living as a religious in a secularized world.

The structures of formation, adapted to the needs of the times, of places and of the people involved, will need to be pluralistic, decentralized, flexible and functional.

In fact a young man ought to be formed in contact with the real environment in which he lives: his family, young men of his own age-group, and true salesian life with its apostolic activities. All this is to be carried out with a view to the service he will have to give, in harmony with his personality and his individual characteristics.

In an atmosphere of open, constant and sincere dialogue,<sup>23</sup> he will feel co-responsible for his own formation and, in proportion to his own maturity, for the running of the house.

**666**      6. *The novice or salesian in formation imbibes in an authentic, personal and vital way the spirit, style of life and work proper to the permanent charism of Don Bosco.*

All this will require a living synthesis and a certain style of spiritual life, of balance and of human relationships. These are all elements that represent so many traits of the personality of the salesian, and which ought to be seen as the objectives of his specific formation.

**667**      a) The salesian style of spiritual life should be:

— centred on God the Father and Christ the Saviour;

— expressed in a style of charity, inspired by the kindness of St. Francis of Sales;

— sustained by a concrete faith that enables one to discover God our Saviour in history and in human events;

— nourished by a hope that is a fount of optimism and of joy, even in the midst of difficulties and sufferings;

<sup>23</sup> Cf RF 24; Intr. 2.

— enlightened by a piety that is simple, eucharistic and marian;

— engaged in a really ascetic life of work and temperance;

— and finally lived in a form of consecrated life in which evangelical chastity is manifested in an educational style of loving kindness, obedience is practised in a family spirit, and poverty is lived as temperance, untiring work and service to poor youth.

**668**      b) The style of *human balance* of the sons of Don Bosco is marked by a willingness to adapt to the circumstances of an intensive and variegated work programme, by simplicity and austerity of life, by an ability to fit in with plans easily and gracefully, by joy and optimism, and by a desire of continual self-improvement.

**669**      c) The style of *human relations*, full of joviality, sincerity, loyalty and enthusiasm, makes the salesian capable of communicating with people, especially the young, with an understanding attitude, ready for dialogue and service; capable too of genuine friendship, with spontaneity and delicacy.

This style of brotherly relations, characterized by *family spirit*, ought to make the salesian community one of fraternal love, based on the identity of ideal and mission, which harmonizes obedience with freedom, overcomes natural likings and antipathies, which recognizes and promotes the richness and the worth of each of its members, which makes friendship possible and which has in its life of prayer and its listening to the word of God, especially in the celebration of the eucharist, its foundation<sup>24</sup> and at the same time its most beautiful expression.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf PO 6.

<sup>25</sup> Cf PeP 70-71.



**670** 7. *The novice or the confrère in formation acquires this salesian spirit by being initiated into true salesian life and by exercising himself in the apostolate proper to our mission.*

According to Don Bosco, a salesian, even during his novitiate, ought not be formed in isolation from real salesian life. For him the exercise of those works that will be carried out for the whole of his life plays a decisive role in formation, for his is a Congregation of educators, not of contemplatives or penitents.<sup>26</sup> He wanted the young to be formed by living a real salesian life of apostolic work proper to our Congregation.

Hence the salesian spirit that the confrère in formation must acquire is assimilated in the exercise of our mission, which is to evangelize youth, especially the poor and abandoned<sup>27</sup> and to form them according to the spirit of the preventive system. This spirit is lived and almost incarnated in the life of the salesian community.

**671** 8. *Following this formative process which lasts the whole of one's life, the salesian will succeed in living in the salesian spirit, the mystery of human salvation, harmonizing, as Don Bosco did, two fundamental aspects of one sole reality:*

a) the realization of one's own personal aspirations, and of one's baptismal and religious consecration;<sup>28</sup>

b) perfect solidarity with the human community, especially of the young, with their problems and aspirations, ever in evolution, and in keeping with the salesian mission amongst all men, christian, non-christian, and non-believers, in a total service of love and witness.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cf STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II pp 386-392.

<sup>27</sup> Cf Const A 1.

<sup>28</sup> Cf LG 46.

<sup>29</sup> Cf LG 40-44-46.

9. *In the formative process in a community united by charity and under the leadership of the superior, those confrères responsible for formation have a specific and necessary mission to accomplish.*<sup>30</sup>

The success or failure of the renewal of formation depends very much on the capacity of those immediately in charge of formation. Hence confrères chosen to hold a formative role in the Congregation ought to be keenly aware of the extent to which the formation of the students depends on their way of thinking and acting.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, those responsible for formation should always manifest both by the example of their lives and by word of mouth an attitude of unreserved fidelity to revelation, to the magisterium of the Church and to the directives of the Congregation, in whose name they form young salesians.<sup>32</sup>

As far as possible the group of formation personnel should include people with different and complementary personalities, since it is only in this way that various models of behaviour can be offered to the young men in formation.

The formative community should constantly take its inspiration from the first apostolic communities and from the homely community of Valdocco, animated by the quickening presence of Don Bosco and by the spirit of kindness of St. Francis of Sales.

Those with a formative role and the young men in formation should live in close communion of life, action and spirit under the leadership of the superior.

But formation must be the result of the harmonious action of all the confrères, both of the local and of the provincial community. Everyone should feel that he

<sup>30</sup> Cf OT 5.

<sup>31</sup> Cf OT 5; PC 18.

<sup>32</sup> Cf RF 87.

belongs to the *formative community* in such a way as to communicate by the example of his own life the authentic values of the salesian vocation,<sup>33</sup> and to foster amongst the students joy in their own vocation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf OT 2.

<sup>34</sup> Cf OT 5.

## DELIBERATIONS OF THE CHAPTER

### A. GENERAL ASPECT OF FORMATION

#### 1. Some aspects of human formation

**673** The human maturity of those in course of formation should be developed in a way that will produce an interior balance indispensable for the religious and salesian life.

Some indications on this point are given here below:

##### a) Use of psychological and pedagogical sciences<sup>1</sup>

A regular and systematic use should be made of psychological and pedagogical aids (psychological charts, medical cards, etc.) in the context of a theological approach. It should not be restricted merely to difficult cases.

This will help the young brothers to get to know themselves better and will favour their development. It will also be a great boon to those in charge of formation, helping them to adapt their approach to individual cases.

But in all this we *must not forget our bounden duty to respect* personal freedom, the dignity of the individual and professional secrets.

##### b) Contacts with the family<sup>2</sup>

**674** During the time of formation, as in the whole of salesian life, relations with one's family must be maintained. Just how this is to be done and the frequency

<sup>1</sup> Cf RC 11; RF 39; Enc. *Sacerdot. coelib.* 63; OT 11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf RF 12.

of visits will depend a great deal on the needs of filial love, the efficacy of such contacts and the exigencies of religious life. The families should be helped to collaborate in the maturing of their sons' vocations, whilst respecting their freedom.

**c) Maturing in human relations**

**675** They should develop a sense of mission and a constant disposition to be of service, which will enable them to treat everyone, young and old, with understanding, discretion, and kindness.<sup>3</sup>

To facilitate an effective sexual maturity everything of an artificial and negative nature should be avoided, particularly in contacts with women. It is true that simple contact with the feminine world is not in itself a solution to the emotional problems; indeed, if badly conducted it can be damaging. But young salesians should educate themselves with the help of those in charge to adopt a natural attitude, unequivocal and clear, in order to understand just what consecrated celibacy means.

**d) Extra-curricular activities**

**676** Following the example of Don Bosco, due importance should be given to physical and cultural activities which, though not strictly belonging to the academic curriculum, can be of immense help in formation, e.g. gymnastics, sport, music, declamation, theatricals, etc. Special attention should be paid to artistic formation, as this is of great importance in pastoral youth work and liturgical action.

**2. Growth in faith: integration of faith and life**

**677** To get to grips with the ever-changing perspectives in man's relationships with the world and with God, an

<sup>3</sup> Cf OT 11 a; RF 51.

adequate training in faith is needed. Therefore this period of formation should:

— present earthly and human realities as values that have in themselves their own consistency and goodness which ought to be recognized as such;<sup>4</sup> it is in the world that God works out our salvation;<sup>5</sup>

— purify the faith of those in formation by means of a clear distinction between the essential and what is only accessory;

— teach them how to find in the word of God the right assessment of the world and its values, and to hear in created nature the voice of God;<sup>6</sup>

— point out to those being formed the presence — not always recognized — of the risen Christ in the world and in men, to enable them to show to a secularized society that God is the only absolute good.

In this way there will be produced a vital synthesis between human effort and religious values.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Spiritual guidance

**678** Recognizing the importance of spiritual direction during formation and to facilitate its practice and make it ever more efficacious and profitable, the Special General Chapter reminds all that:

a) it is essential to distinguish between the two sections of spiritual guidance: *communal and personal* (i.e. of the conscience);<sup>8</sup>

b) in a community with the task of formation the superior is in charge of the spiritual direction of all the

<sup>4</sup> Cf GS 36-41.

<sup>5</sup> Cf GS 62.

<sup>6</sup> Cf GS 62; RF 58.

<sup>7</sup> Cf GS 43.

<sup>8</sup> Cf OT 8.

members of the community. He does this through conferences, 'good nights,' public and private exhortations, talks, and the exercise of paternal authority.<sup>9</sup>

Over and above this the superior is also the 'magister spiritus' of the young confrères in formation; in other words his is the ultimate responsibility for the work of formation in the community and in the individual members;<sup>10</sup>

c) on the personal level, the salesians in formation have the right to choose their own director of conscience. In accordance with the mind of the Church<sup>11</sup> and following salesian tradition and the example of Don Bosco, the superior of the community is also the spiritual director proposed to, but not imposed on, each confrère.<sup>12</sup> It is obvious that a serious preparation is indispensable for such an important mission; nevertheless the young confrères in formation may also make use of confessors and other capable confrères.

When fraternal gatherings are used in a common effort to discover God's will they favour charity, make the apostolate more fruitful and bring a spiritual joy to the common life. But psychology, experience with souls, and the constant practice of the Church all teach that though they can help they cannot take the place of spiritual guidance.

#### 4. Personal experience

679 To keep this formation in touch with reality — most important for personal development and a future apos-

<sup>9</sup> Cf ASC 244, p 99.

<sup>10</sup> Cf ASC 244, p 96.

<sup>11</sup> Cf OT 8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf ASC p 95.

tolate — the General Chapter wishes to emphasize some aspects which are essential for sound formation:<sup>13</sup>

**a) The house of formation and its environs**

For the young confrère's contact with society to be natural, the house of formation itself, at whatever level, should take an active part *as a salesian community* in the life of the local church and neighbourhood wherever it is carrying out its cultural and apostolic mission. It would not be sufficient for the integral formation of the young confrères if individually or in groups they merely made contact with the neighbourhood.<sup>14</sup>

**b) Social-cultural environment of formation and specialization**

The basic formation of all, whether priests, possible future deacons, or lay religious, should take place, unless special reasons require some exception, in the social-cultural environment where their future work lies. Specialization can take place abroad, but preferably only after some years experience in the apostolate.

**c) Use of mass media<sup>15</sup>**

The use of the means of social communication is an indispensable channel for a wider contact with human reality. The intellectual, spiritual and technical preparation of young confrères in the right use of these means should be intensified. This will help them to face the complex problems of the modern world which demand an answer from the Church.

**d) The young confrère and apostolic work for youth**

A gradual and well prepared participation in youth-work, preferably under our own auspices, is to be favoured.

<sup>13</sup> Cf RF Intro. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Cf RF 12.

<sup>15</sup> Cf IM 16.



This is necessary to give the young confrères an idea of the problems of youth today and of their evangelization. But its main purpose is to strengthen their own salesian spirituality and give a pastoral slant to their studies. All this should be done *under the responsibility of those in charge of formation.*

#### **e) Manual work**

Those in formation should also prepare themselves for a life of sacrifice by generously offering their help in the ordinary manual work of the community. This enables them not only to bear witness to poverty, but to understand the real difficulties of life in the world. Work outside our own environment however *must have the authorization of the provincial with the consent of his council.*

### **5. Community Life**

To ensure that the community of a house of formation is a really formative one, the following points should be observed:

#### **680 a) A community of fraternal love**

The real values of obedience and liberty can become integrated in the life of the community only through authentic and brotherly exchanges backed by a common identity of ideals and mission.<sup>16</sup>

Nowadays many seem to think that a community should be built on 'homogeneity.' By this they mean a special affinity of character, ideas, mentality, etc., and a friendly spontaneity. There is no doubt about the human value of all this, but the needs of charity on which a religious community should be built<sup>17</sup> demand that

<sup>16</sup> Cf ET 25-27.

<sup>17</sup> Cf PC 15.

real homogeneity should be sought not on natural affinities but on the desire *to live together in Christ*. The young confrère therefore should be helped along these lines to experience a real community of love by accepting unconditionally the brothers God has given him, *with all their good and bad points*, and by overcoming his likes and dislikes. Real and deep friendships can and should develop in a community of brothers, but they cannot be considered a binding requisite for the formation of the community.

**681 b) A celebrating community (i.e. eucharistic celebration)<sup>18</sup>**

The formative community must be a praying community, and the Mass should be at one and the same time its heart and the best expression of its unity. The holy Mass therefore should be the centre and pivot of the whole period of formation. But the daily Mass must not be reduced to a mere external obligation; it must be the result of a convinced and intended participation which is a sign and index of that spiritual maturity so necessary for the religious life.

This kind of participation is the result of education in a living faith (catechesis).

**682 c) Community dialogue**

Formative activities should be carried out in the atmosphere of an open, constant and sincere community dialogue. The very nature of the formative process requires this, because it involves a vital communication and assimilation of values.<sup>19</sup> Only in this way can the hopes and aspirations of those in formation be made to confront the realities of the practical salesian life in an

<sup>18</sup> Cf ET 48.

<sup>19</sup> Cf RF Intro. 2; RF 24.

atmosphere of fraternal collaboration and co-responsibility. One result of this will be a natural limitation of personal values for one who lives in community.

**683 d) The formative community**

It is important to understand that no single formula will automatically solve the problem of building up the *formative community*. The young confrères must begin to understand, and this above all from the good example of those in charge of them, that the so-called 'communion of spirit' is arrived at only by the patient work of self-renunciation and an openness to others. This is probably the most important experience they must undergo and they should be directed towards it by means of opportune community reflections.<sup>20</sup>

**e) Those in charge of formation**

With the intention of seconding the desire of the Church<sup>21</sup> and keeping in mind the request of the Congregation, the General Chapter lays down the following:

**684** a) In order to be genuine and efficacious guides of the young confrères, those in charge of formation should have had a period of practical and apostolic experience; they should be individuals who are at the same time both very understanding from a human point of view and endowed with a supernatural spirit; they should be easily approachable — this is something of great importance today. They should also try to cultivate, after the example of Don Bosco, a balanced character, self control, an open mind, sincerity, optimism and serenity.

**685** b) The confrères destined for this type of work must

<sup>20</sup> Cf RF 46.

<sup>21</sup> Cf PC 18; OT 5.

have a well-ordered preparation in the various sectors of salesian life:<sup>22</sup>

— *on a doctrinal level*: a sound theology of the religious life and of church-world relations; the essentials of apostolic spirituality and contact with modern culture;

— *on a pedagogical and psychological level*: a fundamental knowledge of pedagogy, an understanding of modern youth, and education in human relations;<sup>23</sup>

— *on the salesian level*: an intimate knowledge of the spirituality of Don Bosco, the preventive system and the life of the Congregation;

— *on the pastoral level*: a practical working experience of our apostolate.<sup>24</sup>

- 686** c) The personnel in charge of formation must always be abreast of the times. Centres of salesian spirituality should be founded which among other things will help future members of formative communities to prepare themselves from a salesian point of view for their work.<sup>25</sup>

## **7. Doctrinal and technical formation**

### **687 a) Seriousness of intellectual work**

Professors and students should approach their intellectual and professional studies with that degree of seriousness that will enable them to announce the gospel message to the men of our time, bearing in mind the ever-increasing demands of modern culture.<sup>26</sup> They should remember that this 'doctrinal formation must not consist simply in an exchange of ideas but must tend rather to a real interior formation of soul.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Cf RF 34.

<sup>23</sup> Cf RF 35.

<sup>24</sup> Cf RF 37.

<sup>25</sup> Cf RF 31-36.

<sup>26</sup> Cf RF 59.

<sup>27</sup> Cf OT 17.

**688 b) Intellectual formation of brothers**

In the formation of brothers, theology should permeate all their culture. Indeed it is in the light of theology that formation and instruction acquire their deep significance. The level of theology however will be proportionate to the grade of culture attained in the other branches of study and qualifications.

Brothers should likewise be acquainted with philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, catechetics and other sciences, all of which are indispensable in the formation of an educator, and especially a religious educator. But it must always be kept in mind that formation must be apostolic and pastoral, and involve practical application of the principles studied theoretically.

**689 c) Link between profane and religious culture**

All the doctrinal and technical formation should be such as to bring about a proper synthesis between serious, profane culture (seeking and respecting human values), and a solid religious formation, even from a cultural view-point. Cultural and technical formation should not be an end in itself but should rather lead the confrères in formation to the attainment of a complete human and christian development.

**690 d) Salesian teachers in non-salesian institutes**

Whenever possible salesians should obtain places on the teaching staff of those institutes, seminaries and study centres frequented by our confrères.<sup>28</sup>

**e) Salesian study-centres**

These should have an adequate and well qualified salesian staff, supplemented by non-salesian professors whenever necessary or opportune.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Cf RF 21.

<sup>29</sup> Cf RC 38.

#### **f) Permanent formation and refresher courses**

In the overall arrangement of studies in each province, provision should be made for initiatives which will guarantee a permanent type of formation, and a cultural and professional adaptability to the needs of the times.

### **B. STAGES OF FORMATION**

#### **691 1. Continuity of the formative process**

The different phases of formation should be linked one with the other. To ensure this there should be a co-ordination of all the stages of formation on a provincial basis and a periodic exchange of ideas and views between those working in this sector.

#### **692 2. Vocational work**

##### **a) Projects in spiritual formation and service**

These, as well as social, missionary and apostolic action amongst the young should be developed; they help to predispose their hearts to the divine call. They should be frequently reminded of the pressing needs of the Church and of the world, and especially of the young people of the <sup>30</sup> present day. Respect for their personal freedom should not prevent us from helping them.

##### **b) Adult vocations**

Following the example of Don Bosco every effort should be made to help those candidates for the priesthood or the religious life who find it difficult to follow their vocation because of their age.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf OT 2.

<sup>31</sup> Cf Const. A 6.

**c) Collaboration in work for vocations**<sup>32</sup>

We should enlist the collaboration of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the co-operators, Volunteers of Don Bosco, past pupils and other associations, and the families with whom we are in contact, in promoting vocations.

**d) Presenting our salesian vocation in its two forms**

Whilst promoting vocations in general, let us not forget our own salesian vocation of both the priest and the brother (lay religious). Brothers as well as priests should take part in the work for vocations.

**e) Candidates for the salesian lay-religious life**

The various provinces should as far as possible encourage vocations to the brotherhood amongst the pupils of our technical schools. Likely boys should be looked after by a lay religious himself and should carry out an apostolate amongst the other pupils.

**f) Examination of the success of vocation work**

The number of vocations is a gauge of our apostolate amongst the young. Lack of vocations (priestly, religious, or as lay leaders) is a sure sign that we have failed to help the young to find their true christian involvement during the stages of their education. A serious examination at provincial and local level of the whole question of vocations would help the province, every community, and the individual confrères to realize their individual responsibility in this regard and encourage them to set an example that will help the young to respond to a possible call of the Lord with great generosity.

<sup>32</sup> Cf RF 8.

### **3. Preparation for the novitiate**

**693** Should a candidate ask for a trial period before the novitiate, this should readily be granted. Such a period might even be advised by those in charge of formation in certain cases, and possibly even outside the houses of the Congregation. In deciding what method to follow, the assistance and guidance of the candidates should be clearly provided for.<sup>33</sup>

### **4. The novitiate**

#### **694 a) Relations between novices and professed**

These should be as natural as possible because formation, especially that of the novitiate, must be the result of the common effort of all the community.<sup>34</sup> The latter must be a real 'formative community' and as such be able to show by its way of life the authentic values of the salesian charism.<sup>35</sup>

#### **b) Clothing ceremony**

The clothing ceremony, or bestowal of some distinctive badge, should be left to the decision of each province.

### **5. Admission to first profession**

#### **695 a) Standards required**

The following criteria should be followed for admission to the vows. The novices should have:

*a)* sufficient health, and a qualification that will make them useful for salesian work, or (in the case of younger candidates) the ability to acquire one;

<sup>33</sup> Cf RC 4-12.

<sup>34</sup> Cf RC 28.

<sup>35</sup> Cf RC 5.



b) adequate development in the art of human relationships. This will help them to esteem the personal dignity of their confrères, especially from the point of view of spiritual values;

c) a complete and balanced emotional life that will enable them to relate to other human beings in a serene and selfless fashion, and to use with inward freedom the healthy human values of one's life context, as sources of creative joy;

d) such a deep christian experience as to enable them to recognize the Father and Christ as the only reason for their existence, and to consider all other values as merely subordinate to the work of salvation;

e) a knowledge of the salesian spirit sufficient to inspire them to accept with enthusiasm the mission proper to our Society and to place all their energies at its disposal.

#### **b) Responsible entry into the congregation**

Entrance into the salesian religious life signifies for the candidate an undertaking so serious that it must be the result of a personal decision taken in collaboration with the community rather than a simple unilateral decision of '*admission.*' It is true that only the superiors can admit a candidate to vows and orders in the name of the Church and the Congregation,<sup>36</sup> but this action of the superiors, the expression of their judgement or opinion is fundamentally a help offered to those in formation to enable them to take a responsible decision before God, the Church and their own conscience.

<sup>36</sup> Cf OT 2.

## **6. Period of temporary vows**

### **696 a) Tirocinium**

So that the vital experience of the tirocinium may be truly formative, it should be done if possible in groups. The beginner should find in the community, and especially in the superior, an attitude of understanding, encouragement and support which will favour his development.

### **697 b) Renewal of vows**

In considering the question of the renewal of temporary vows the superiors should make a clear distinction between the process of maturing in the individual, and his unsuitability for the salesian life. Therefore those who do not give hope of ever being admitted to perpetual profession, should not be allowed to renew their temporary vows.<sup>37</sup>

### **698 c) Re-admission without a second novitiate**

Whenever a member who left the Congregation legitimately, either at the end of his temporary profession or with a dispensation from his vows, asks to be re-admitted, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council can admit him in conformity with the prescriptions of *Renovationis Causam* no. 38, 11, without the need of repeating his novitiate.

A temporary departure before the perpetual vows should not be considered a normal phase of formation but an exception to be made only in those cases where a personal review of his position on the part of the religious requires it.

<sup>37</sup> Cf RC 6.

**d) Preparation for final profession**

The perpetual profession, as the culmination of religious commitment, should be preceded by a convenient period of preparation.<sup>38</sup>

**7. On-going formation - training plan**

**699** Each province or group of provinces should draw up a training plan, so as to ensure the availability of confrères who are specialists in the different kinds of salesian activity.

<sup>38</sup> Cf RC 9.

## TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

**700** 1. The Special General Chapter has limited itself to pointing out the principles which shall govern salesian formation; it desires the existing norms to remain in force until the various provinces, in accordance with art. 106 of the Constitutions, have decided on their own plan. In the meantime provincials and their councils shall make only those changes which they feel to be necessary and urgent in the light of what has been said in this document (i.e., the document on formation).

**701** 2. *During the next six years:*

a) provision must be made as a matter of urgency for the necessary up-dating of the confrères. This will be done through the official magisterium of the Congregation, and by the organization of intensive courses of study and reflection, and of other activities, especially at provincial level;

b) all the brothers should be given the possibility of frequenting regular courses of theology and catechetics which will make them more competent in the teaching of religion.

**SALESIAN PONTIFICAL ATHENAEUM  
(Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano - P.A.S.)**

**Practical Directives of the Special General Chapter**

**702** The Special General Chapter ratifies the general trend of the Statutes of the P.A.S. in respect of its structure as a Salesian Pontifical University with the following principal characteristics:

*A. as a university:*

*a)* primary concern for teaching and scientific research;

*b)* academic autonomy within the limits laid down by the statutes, and the economic support necessary to ensure its efficiency;

*c)* a teaching staff adequate in numbers and qualifications;

*d)* open also to external students, ecclesiastic and lay.

*B. as pontifical:*

*a)* at the service of the Church for spreading christian ideas and promoting knowledge in the specific field of the salesian mission;

*b)* faithful to the catholic magisterium and tradition.

*C. as salesian:*

*a)* directed and sustained by the salesian Congregation, in the light of the ecclesial context of Vatican II;

b) at the service of the Congregation for promoting its mission and unity at the level of scientific research and teaching;

c) primarily for the formation of salesian personnel;

d) a centre of stimulation, teaching and research in the following fields:

— education, with special emphasis on the system of Don Bosco;

— pastoral work for the young, and catechetics;

— salesian spirituality, especially as realized in and by Don Bosco.<sup>1</sup>

703

2. The Special General Chapter declares that the specific object of the P.A.S. *must be the study on salesian lines of youth and its problems*, chiefly from the following aspects: theological and pastoral, catechetical, educational, psycho-social, etc.

For this reason every faculty and institute of the P.A.S. in its approach, methods and content of its courses, shall aim clearly at this object.<sup>2</sup>

3. The chief scope of the P.A.S. is to give to its salesian undergraduates a university formation, conferring degrees and other qualifications, with a view to the different forms of apostolic work proper to our Society and the preparation of teachers for studentates of philosophy and theology.<sup>3</sup>

4. The accurate selection of confrères, both professors and students, for the P.A.S. is of the greatest importance, both as regards stability in vocation, personal equilibrium

<sup>1</sup> GE; Normae quaedam; Regulations 321,323; Statuta Generalia: art 2, 1; 2, 2; 3, 3, 5; 6, 7; 21, 22; 27, 1.

<sup>2</sup> SGC document 1-4; Sta. gen.: art 2, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Regulations, art 322; Sta. gen.: 2, 1-2; 27, 1.

and religious spirit, as well as their qualifications and intellectual aptitude and ability.<sup>4</sup>

**704** 5. The Superior Council, on which the P.A.S. must directly depend through the Councillor for Formation or a delegate, will study a system of exchange of professors between the different salesian centres of higher studies throughout the world, so as to promote:

a) a stable provision for the basic staff of guaranteed international character;

b) reasonable assistance by those provinces in a position to provide teachers for limited periods, without prejudice to their own needs.<sup>5</sup>

6. Since the P.A.S. is at the service of the whole Congregation, *the provinces are obliged to provide both teachers and students* at the request of the Superior Council.<sup>6</sup>

7. Bearing in mind the primary objective of the P.A.S. and its fundamental importance for the renewal of the Congregation, every province shall undertake *to send students to the P.A.S. periodically*, subsequently keeping in close touch with those in charge there.<sup>7</sup>

### **Temporary directives**

**705** 8. The Special General Chapter *has decided that the Superior Council should nominate a post-capitular commission in immediate dependence on the said Council, which will put into effect whatever is necessary for the renewal of the P.A.S.; in particular its task will be:*

<sup>4</sup> Regulations, art 326.

<sup>5</sup> Stat. gen., art 3, 4; 5; 20, 4; 30.

<sup>6</sup> Regulations, 328.

<sup>7</sup> Regulations, 325.

a) to draw up a plan within a prescribed time for effecting the necessary reforms of the P.A.S., to ensure that it shall fulfil its role as a university and attain its objects of a salesian and formative nature laid down by the Special General Chapter;

b) to revise the statutes so as to bring them fully into line with the directives of the General Chapter and the mission of the Congregation;

c) to consider which faculties and institutes of the P.A.S. should be strengthened, created or suppressed, and to take the necessary steps to bring about the re-adjustment;

d) to make suitable plans to guarantee the development of the "centre of studies on Don Bosco," and to consider the advisability of setting up a "Higher Institute of Salesian Spirituality;"

e) to consider the question of a revision and unification of the administration of the P.A.S., and to seek the means most suitable for guaranteeing a definite economic autonomy sufficient to sustain its specific objects;

f) to draw up norms which will ensure, in accordance with the statutes and in the light of the post-capitular situation, a proper re-shaping of the teaching and student body. Amongst other things these norms shall indicate:

1. the respective competence of the religious and academic authorities, especially in the matter of the selection and preparation of professors;

2. the previous academic course obligatory for all proposed members of the teaching staff;

3. the 'academic quota' of study, work, publications, etc., required of all professors;

4. the procedure to be followed, and the competence and responsibility of academic and religious auth-



orities in the matter of promotion, transfer and dismissal of professors;

*g)* to consider, how the houses of residence and formation can be separated from the academic centre, so as to ensure the realization of the fundamental objectives of both;

*h)* to consider, in consequence, the desirability or otherwise of the P.A.S. continuing to exist as an independent province;

*i)* to determine the procedure and the fixed periods within which the practical directives decided on by the Special General Chapter in the light of the diagnosis prepared by the Capitular Commission for the P.A.S. shall be carried out, so as to make it possible to present to the next General Chapter an exhaustive evaluation of the work of the next six years.