

the Province summary so that the voices of young people may be taken into account during the Provincial Chapter.

- 6) The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter will send the Province summary of the voice of young people completing the document, **in digital form only by 31 May 2019** to Fr Saimy Ezhanikatt, the Secretary of the Moderator of the GC28: [segretarocg28@sdb.org](mailto:segretarocg28@sdb.org)

## 2.2 THE SPECIFIC FORMATION OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER

### Reflections from the Seminar of 12-15 October 2017

Fr Ivo COELHO

*General Councillor for Formation*

A seminar on the specific formation of the Salesian Brother was held at Genzano, 12-15 October 2017. The participants were 20 Salesians from all the Regions, plus the 4 members of the Formation Department that organized the meeting. From the centres for the specific formation of Brothers there were the directors and one other team member, but also 3 young Salesian Brothers who made a special contribution to the seminar, all of them being past pupils of our centres for the specific formation of Salesian Brothers. Some of those invited were not able to participate for a variety of reasons, and so, unfortunately, we had no representatives from the Mediterranean and South Asia Regions.

The aim of the seminar was to evaluate the specific formation of Salesian Brothers and learn from the experience of the centres, both those actually functioning (CRESCO-Guatemala, Yaoundé-Camerun, Sandor-Paranaque), and those that have suspended activity (Torino-Valdocco, Shillong-India, Sunyani-Ghana).

The participants came prepared with (1) a comment on the revised portions of our *Ratio* regarding the Salesian Brother (cf. the 2016 online edition), (2) a comment on the evaluation of intellectual formation carried out by the Formation Department in 2012, and (3) an evaluation of the centre for the specific formation of Salesian Brothers with which they were associated.

Certain interesting points emerged from the work of the seminar:

- There are Provinces that do not see the need/usefulness of specific formation for Salesian Brothers.

- Our *Ratio* (2016) is appreciated for the clarity and solidity with which it presents the formation journey of the Salesian Brother, but we need to take into consideration the great variety of personal and regional situations.
- The two important factors in the experience of the centres for the specific formation of the Salesian Brother are the quality and preparation of formators, and the quality of the programme of studies.
- As far as the programme of studies is concerned, we maintain that theology is not merely a preparation for aspirants to the priesthood; it is, above all, a gift for thinking the faith and giving reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3,15).
- It is not true to say that Salesian Brothers have always had difficulty with the programme of studies. The programme of the Institut de Théologie e de Pastorale pour les Religieux, Yaoundé is highly appreciated, as also the online catechetical course of Maryvale University that used to be part of the programme in Sunyani.
- The specific formation of the Salesian Brother should have a more practical orientation. It should aim at vocational growth and at the development of pastoral and educative capacities. In this sense, we need to give more attention to spiritual theology. The specific formation of Salesian Brothers could be re-thought as a prolonged experience of “spiritual exercises.”
- To ensure a good component of Salesian studies and of the theology of consecrated life, we need to prepare Salesians, not only Priests but also Brothers, for formation and for teaching. It is good, therefore, that some Salesian Brothers earn a bachelor’s degree in theology.
- Pastoral accompaniment – “learning by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation” (C 98) – is important. If formators are well prepared for this, accompaniment and discernment (C 119) can become the heart of the method of formation.

## Conclusions

### *On the formation journey of the Salesian Brother:*

- 1) The Formation Department will evaluate the “formation sections” of the Provincial Directories on the topic of the Salesian Brother, to ensure a formation journey in keeping with the *Ratio* (2016).
- 2) The Formation Department will offer the Congregation criteria for discernment of the two forms of our vocation; it will offer a practical course in such discernment to novice masters and those in charge of prenovices.
- 3) The Provincials will dialogue with the Salesian Brothers already during the postnovitiate, to draw up with them a clear and personalized formation process, making sure that professional qualification is neither improvised nor too late, and that it be always in view of the needs of the Congregation and of the Province, as stated in the Provincial Organic Plan and in the Provincial Plan for the qualification of confreres.

### *On specific formation:*

- 4) The Formation Department and the Regional Councillors will maintain for each Province an annually updated list of Salesian Brothers due for specific formation.
- 5) The various centres for specific formation will offer formation modules for Salesian Brothers who have not been able to frequent the centre, and also for the ongoing formation of Salesian Brothers.
- 6) With a view to helping Salesian Brothers in the area of self-awareness, discernment and accompaniment, the Formation Department will offer formators, beginning with the formators in centres for the specific formation of Salesian Brothers, a course on the *experiential method* in formation.
- 7) The Formation Department will prepare and circulate materials in various languages for specific and ongoing formation (on

particular themes, history of Salesian Brothers, common tools to be used in the formation process), with the help of the Istituto Storico Salesiano (ISS) and the site created by Bro. Marco Bay: <http://www.coadiutoresalesiano.net/>

### Decisions of the Rector Major and his council

- 1) CRESCO – Guatemala and the Salesian Brothers’ Formation House “Blessed Stephen Sándor Community – Parañaque will study and modify their academic programme in order to make it more suitable for the formation of consecrated laypersons, with emphases that are different from the theological preparation of aspirants for the priesthood. The programmes of Religious Studies Institutes, as for example those of the Instituto Superior de Ciencias Religiosas Don Bosco, Martí-Codolar - Barcelona, and the Institut de Théologie et de Pastorale pour les Religieux, Yaoundé, could become useful points of reference.
- 2) The specific formation of Salesian Brothers will include an experience of one or two weeks in the Salesian Places, possibly in preparation for perpetual profession.
- 3) The professional formation of Salesian Brothers needs to be ensured, keeping in mind the variety of contexts.
- 4) Every Region, through the Regional Formation Commission, will study the possibility of offering a differentiated course of postnovitiate studies, in accordance with the *Ratio* (2016 # 408): “The studies of the postnovitiate take into consideration the characteristics proper to the vocation of the Salesian brother. Because of the importance of philosophy in forming to religious life and preparing an educator of the young, the Salesian brother too studies it in the manner and to the extent that is appropriate to his specific vocation. His programme of studies also includes a training in pedagogy, elements of pastoral formation and catechetics, and a socio-political education that is based primarily on the social teaching of the Church and geared to preparing him for a specific educational activity in

the world. It is therefore necessary that at provincial or inter-provincial level *the brothers be offered ‘a formation programme that is serious but also flexible and adapted to the nature of their various responsibilities as well as to their actual possibilities’ (GC21 301).*”

- 5) A new formation centre, mainly for the Salesian Brothers of Europe, is being set up at Martí-Codolar, Barcelona, in accordance with the decision taken by the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, in 2016. Thus, with CRESCO, Yaoundé and Sandor, we will have 4 centres for the specific formation of the Salesian Brother. At the moment, the confreres of the South Asia Region and the English-speaking confreres of the Africa-Madagascar Region have been asked to frequent the Sandor Community, Parañaque.

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*Enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco’s spirit, the Salesian commits himself to a formation process which will last all his life and will keep pace with his maturing in other ways. He learns by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation at the various moments of his life and accepts the ascetical demands it makes on him.*

*With the help of Mary, his Mother and Teacher, he gradually becomes a pastor and educator of the young in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced. (C 98)*

Just as formation embraces the whole of our life, so also the concern for our Salesian consecrated identity in its lay and priestly forms is a gift that reaches everyone and does good to all. Specific formation is not, therefore, a question for the ‘experts,’ or only for those who find themselves at that particular phase of Salesian life. It is a responsibility and a gift that regards each one of us, for the good of all the Salesians of Don Bosco in the world.