



RATIO INSTITUTIONNIS

Brothers of Christian Instruction

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Roma – June 2007

Abbreviation used in this booklet

C	: Constitutions in the Rule of Life
CCC	: Catechism of Catholic Church.
GC	: General Chapter
D	: Directory in the Rule of Life
FR	: Formation in Religious Institutes, Rome, 1990
SAC	: Starting Afresh from Christ, Rome 2002
S	: Sermons of Father de la Mennais
SC	: Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium (Vatican II)
VC	Vita Consecrata, Apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, Rome 1996
FLC	: Fraternal Life in Community, Rome 1994

PREFACE

The *Ratio Institutionis* of the Congregation, a fruit of hard work on the part of those who have devoted to it a lot of their time, energy and talent, comes to us after a long preparation.

In 1998, the Formators, gathered in a session, expressed the wish of having a common formation guide for the whole Congregation. Previously, some Provinces or Regions had made their own projects. But it became necessary, in view of a greater communion, to produce an official approved text for the whole Congregation

To realise this project, the General Chapter of 2000 gave a mandate to the General Council to elaborate a project of *Ratio Institutionis*.

A Commission, led by Brother Josu Olabarrieta, Assistant Superior General, began working on this project forthwith. Relying first and foremost on the texts of the Church on the initial and on-going formation, they acquainted themselves with a number of « Formation Guides » of other Congregations and elaborated a basic text. This was subsequently followed by several stages which permitted the Major Superiors and the Formators to share their own reflections.

A team made up of four Brothers, one from each sector, finally studied the diverse contributions and drew up a text that had to be presented to the General Council in view of the General Chapter of 2006.

The Brothers assembled in the General Chapter studied the text they had received previously, and made diverse observations on its form before

it was finally adopted as the basic text. This was then handed over to the General Council, which entrusted the work of drafting the final text to a Commission that would put into consideration the observations made by the General Chapter. This was done in the course of the month of February 2007, in Rome.

After receiving the approbation of the General Council, it was found necessary, for the last time, to have the *Ratio Institutionis* translated (into other languages).

I would like, therefore, before proposing the reading and the implementation of this text to the whole Institute, to thank the Brothers who have worked on its drafting, from the first to the final elaboration of the text, and in passing, those who made contributions and all the translators.

Now we have, before us, a document which must be the official reference in matters concerning *the initial formation* and *the on-going formation* in the Institute.

When a young man enters the Institute, he is searching for an answer to the call born in the secret of his heart, in a personal dialogue with Christ whom he has decided to follow in a specific form of life, that is the consecrated life according to the Mennaisian charism.

When a Brother engages himself by vows to live according to the Rule of Life of the Brothers of Christian Instruction, he engages himself to follow Christ in the manner of Jean-Marie de la Mennais, according to the charism that the latter received from the Spirit, in the Church, the People of God.

When a Brothers lives thus, day by day, year after year, with the desire to resemble more and more the One who called him, his steps are sometimes enthusiastic, generous, or hesitant. Sometimes even trials urge him to take on new and liberating strides on the itinerary of his life.

The experience of each and everyone shows that this way to holiness is sometimes a walk in the desert where everything becomes a trial, and at other times, a path with bright sunshine, lined up with marvellous fruits. Committing oneself to live the Rule of Life joyfully with an ardent and decided heart is one thing; to live it faithfully and perseveringly throughout

one's life is another thing altogether. *Formation* is the proposed means that helps us to get there. It is not, first of all, a question of acquiring new knowledge, other than that which enables us to know more and more the God who has called us, always recognising more clearly that we are sent by Him to save the youths, at the heart of a Church-communion, together with the Laity who recognise themselves also as called to this same mission.

We must let ourselves be « formed », « transformed », and « transfigured », all along our life. Which Brother can say he has attained holiness? Which one can dare assert that he has no more progress to make in order to respond to the calls that Christ addresses to him today? Which one can certify that he is a perfect image of Christ before the young and the adults?

Every one of us knows well that it is a lifetime job to really graft himself to Christ and « realise his own growth until he has built himself up in love » (Ep 4, 16).

This « Guide » is, therefore, a route companion for all the Brothers. It provides the means to be faithful to the Rule of Life, the expression of the Will of God. It will certainly be a precious guide to the Brothers who are responsible for the initial or the on-going formation. But all will find therein the fundamental guidelines that will always be helpful on their journey to holiness.

I confide this *Ratio Institutionis* to the prayer of Mary. She who knew how to listen to the Spirit, and who humbly let herself be taught by her own Son, will let us be transformed by the light of the Spirit who aroused the ardour and audacity of Jean-Marie de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes.

No, «none of us will enter into the bosom of God, if he has not been conformed to the image of his Son » (S VII, 2172)

Brother Yannick HOUSSAY
Superior General

RATIO INSTITUTIONIS

Formation Programme

PRESENTATION

By “ratio institutionis”¹ is meant the Mennaisian pedagogical tool which aims at defining the main formation guidelines and at identifying the course to follow, the objectives to attain, the progressive stages to go through, the means to be used as well as the facilitators whose role it is to accompany the Brothers throughout their life as they follow Christ and are configured to his image.

The current “ratio institutionis” is not a total novelty as the Congregation has had programmes of formation since its very beginning. Such programmes were sometimes sets of instructions guiding those in charge of formation in various Provinces. At other times, practical experience has been transmitted from one generation to the next so that, without any doubt, a formation tradition has been established in the Institute.

¹ Literally “spirit of the institution”, the core of what is to be transmitted and lived, which concerns all Brothers regardless of age or function; not to be confused with “Ratio Studiorum” which defines the precise programmes and their contents at different levels of formation.

However, since Vatican Council II, as a result of need and of circumstance, the concept of formation programmes in the strict sense of the word, has materialised as a unified entity for the Congregation as a whole.

In our Institute, the 1988 Chapter, while dealing with vocational pastoral work, broached the theme of formation, focusing on a few orientations rather than drafting a well-defined formation programme. This, nevertheless, indicated a concern for the subject.

The apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (1996) already underscored the need and the urgency to develop a *ratio* in all congregations: “The Synod Fathers earnestly asked all Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to draw up as soon as possible a *ratio institutionis*, that is, a formation programme inspired by their particular charism, presenting clearly and in all its stages the course to be followed in order to assimilate fully the spirituality of the respective Institute”.²

This paragraph of the Exhortation points to a few important aspects, special consideration being given to a unifying principle running through the main themes of formation while drawing attention to distinguishing features as well as emphasizing the relevance of life-long formation. “The ratio responds to a pressing need today. On the one hand, it shows how to pass on the Institute's spirit so that it will be lived in its integrity by future generations, in different cultures and geographical regions; on the other hand, it explains to consecrated persons how to live that spirit in the different stages of life on the way to full maturity of faith in Christ.”³

The document *Starting Afresh from Christ* (2002) insists on the importance of formation for the renewal of congregations, showing particular interest for life-long formation: “A serious ongoing formation program, built into a radical reconsideration of the problem of formation in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, will help

² VC 68

³ VC 68

light the way to an authentic path to renewal: renewal in fact ‘depends primarily upon the formation of their members’ ” (n° 14).

In the Congregation, the need has been felt for a formation programme that could benefit all sectors and strengthen their unity. This was the wish of the formation masters who attended the 1998 Castelgandolfo meeting. As for the 2000 General Chapter, it gave the explicit mandate to work out such a formation programme when it decided “to develop the main themes of a programme of formation (Cf. ratio institutionis (V.C. 68) which informs all stages of a Brother’s life, with special emphasis on initial formation” (p. 15).

That decision of the Chapter is included in the paragraphs dealing with the means and the deepening process of the Mennaisian charism and, as such, this formation programme must integrate the essential aspects of our charism.

In fact, this Chapter decision corresponds to a norm established by Canon Law: “Therefore, proper law must define the program of this formation and its duration, attentive to the needs of the Church and the conditions of people and times, insofar as the purpose and character of the institute require it.” (N° 659-2) In several congregations, this norm has already been applied in a document dealing with the formation programme.

In order to carry out this decision of the Chapter, the Congregation has already got underway. The steps that have been taken require the participation of all, for they concern everybody, everywhere and persons of all ages. It is a matter of the “Ratio Institutionis” becoming a way of conversion, of renewal, of creative fidelity to the founding intuitions that were at the origin of the Congregation.

FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RATIO

1. Formation, as a way of life, is a dynamic and progressive journey towards a unified life in response to one's vocation. It is a discernment in the Spirit of daily promptings from God in the midst of the diverse situations where the Mennaisian charism takes shape.

Formation is at the heart of the vocational experience and, as such, it is a means to the maturation of the whole person towards a progressive configuration to Christ which is accomplished in the educational mission and lived in community in conformity with the Mennaisian charism.

It is therefore essential to place the whole of the formation process in the context of life-long or ongoing formation. In fact, formation cannot be confined to the initial phase of a project ; it is an ongoing process through which a person is conformed to Christ in a never-ending dynamic conversion.

2. For a long time, initial formation was given the lion's share of our attention. And yet, it is strategically more effective to place the various maturation moments of the person in the context of life-long experiences. It is not a question of selective interventions or of occasional sessions. Ongoing formation implies a positive attitude on the part of a person and of a community which allow themselves to be drawn out by God daily so that he may fashion them through the events of history.

Listening to the Word of God, mental prayer, the sacraments, community life, apostolic work and all the usual means which foster personal growth are at the heart of that process.

The community, the youth and the lay persons with whom they share their mission, the poor from whom they learn the art of loving and of serving, the events and the situations which draw them out are all means of formation for Brothers.

3. Human growth takes place within the framework of interpersonal relationships. This interaction helps persons define themselves in relation to common values. Because each Brother becomes responsible for the growth of others, those dedicated to the ministry*⁴ of formation are called upon to give and to receive on the road of conversion where all are engaged.

⁴ Asterisks refer to the glossary at the end of the document.

1

FORMATION IN OUR CONGREGATION

OBJECTIVE AND FRAME OF REFERENCE*

4. The primary objective of the formation process is the promotion of a Brother's growth in union with Christ and configuration to him, through a course of action which allows him to gradually identify with the attitude of Christ towards his Father⁵, in keeping with the Mennaisian charism which is his distinctive feature, in a process of personalization*.

a) Configuration to Christ

5. The central objective of all itinerary of formation is identification with Christ in keeping with a specific charismatic perspective: the Mennaisian perspective. The following of Jesus and the configuration to Christ are the norms by which the value of the formation process may be judged.⁶

As disciple of Christ, the Brother has been called to follow the same road as the apostles⁷ and has been invited to know, love and serve him.

Since the fullness of the mystery of Christ can only be known through his Word and since "ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ himself"⁸, love for the Word of God must be at the heart of all formation course of action.

Formation finds its inspiration in the Word of God and the main task and concern of the period of formation is to make the Word of God one's staple diet. It is a matter of attentive listening and of a practical wisdom-inspired* learning process so that one may "judge as He has judged, love what He has loved... reject what He Has rejected, despise what he has despised"⁹.

⁵ VC 65

⁶ VC 65

⁷ Rule of Life, D 8

⁸ D 87

⁹ S VIII 2469-2471

b) According to the Mennaisian Charism

6. Amongst the wide variety of charisms which the Spirit has given rise to in the Church, and in communion with them, the Brother actualises the gift of the grace bestowed upon his Founders¹⁰.

The formation project comprises a proposal of spirituality, of a spiritual journey in keeping with the charism, of a mystique open to the mission. The Brother is thereby “determined to remain faithful to the precious heritage contained in the examples and writings of the Founders which inspire him to grow in the spirit of faith and charity, abnegation and humility.”¹¹

Here are the salient features of the Mennaisian spirituality which all Brothers are called upon to deepen and live by today:¹²

- seeking the will of God on a daily basis (the experience of Gethsemane)¹³;
- the primacy of God Alone¹⁴;
- surrender to Providence lived as availability and bold confidence leading to peace and joy¹⁵;
- humility lived as renunciation of the will to power in order to follow Christ who entices and calls to follow him on his journey in the service of the world of today¹⁶;
- the desire to be living images of Jesus as Brothers “in the service of God’s people, especially youth, with a preference for the poor”.¹⁷

c) By Means of a Process of Personalization*

7. On that basis, formation is considered as a conscious and harmonious process of integration* of the Gospel ideal as our Founders, especially Father de la Mennais, lived it in everyday life and in the mission.

¹⁰ D 1

¹¹ D 7

¹² GC 2000, p. 14

¹³ D 6 and 1

¹⁴ Circ. 1824

¹⁵ D 8

¹⁶ D42

¹⁷ C 1

There can be no formation until the proposed values and contents can be and are effectively experienced and sampled to the extent that they become for the person in formation a way of apprehending reality, a new standard to live by, an original internal wisdom.

Throughout formation, processes of integration* take place whereby the radical reason for, and the deep-rooted motives of, actions are the most important. A radical reorientation of the *heart* in the biblical sense is involved, as the seat where the most personal and life-committing decisions are made. In this regard, one must avoid the pitfall of conformism or of mere external adaptations, where what becomes important is adopting a form of behaviour which satisfies demands that are external to the person.

AGENTS AND MODELS OF INSPIRATION

a) Agents

The Subject

8. Formation concerns, directly and in the first place, the subject himself. He alone can carry through to a successful conclusion the growth process, making his very own the values which sustain his life, personalizing his relationships and espousing events positively. Formation is the subject's responsibility; he is the first author of his own formation.

The Holy Spirit

9. In formation, the first and key agent, without whom no true following of Christ is possible, is the Holy Spirit¹⁸. It is the Spirit who urges the Brother to recognise Jesus as the Lord and who allows the Brother to be configured to Christ¹⁹.

The Spirit who renders the Brother conform to Christ calls him to follow Him who consecrates us for the mission to which we are destined by the Father.

¹⁸ 1 Co 12, 3

¹⁹ VC 19

The Spirit's creative and revitalizing action plumbs the depths of the Brother's personality, realigning his vision of reality. He gives him the key and the necessary strength to live according to God, in constant reference to Christ and the world²⁰.

- In order to open himself to and cooperate with the action of the Spirit, the Brother
- develops humility, docility and the attitude of the disciple who allows himself to be taught;
- practices discernment in order to shed the necessary light on his own itinerary of formation and to recognize the presence of the Spirit in all areas of his life and history as revealed through human mediations.

The Virgin Mary

10. Mary has always been associated with the action of the Spirit. She must therefore be present at the start of every process of formation.

Over and above the consideration that Brothers “faithful to Father de la Mennais’ spirit (...) shall have a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin, admirable model and powerful guardian of chastity”²¹, the Brother must see in Mary, model of all who are consecrated to the Lord, the faithful disciple of Christ and the reference for his growing identification with her Son.

Patroness of the Congregation, she is also the living image of the spirit of the beatitudes and the soul of the mission of evangelisation and of education. An “expert in pedagogy”, she who accompanied Jesus as he grew in age, wisdom and grace, is ever present to those who attempt to reach the full stature of Christ.

The Ecclesial Community

11. The Congregation is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church: the Congregation arose in the Church and our mission makes of all Brothers

²⁰ D 8 and 2

²¹ C 14

“religious in the service of the Church”²². It is the Church that approves their Rule of Life²³ as the charismatic implementation of the Gospel and it is the Church that receives their vows²⁴.

The work of formation must take place in an atmosphere of ecclesial communion²⁵ since it is in the Church that baptismal life and the religious consecration find their nourishment.

Through his love for the Church and his fidelity to the Pope, John Mary de la Mennais is a model for our times, especially for persons responsible for formation who may recall the Founder’s appeal in his last circular: “The times are bad. Pray and console the Church by the fragrance of your virtues.”²⁶

Those in Charge of Formation and the Formation Team

12. The specific role of those in charge of formation, together with that of other Brothers, is part and parcel of the unique and common Mennaisian mission. The Spirit of Jesus acts through them. This is why listening to the Spirit and being attentive to his promptings and inspiration must be a permanent attitude on their part.

The roles of those in charge of formation are:

- to discern, together with the persons undergoing formation, the action of God in them and the journeys through which He wishes to see them move forward;
- to accompany them through the various stages of their personal growth, showing respect for their rate of advancement and constantly providing the necessary assistance to their development;
- to provide them, at each stage, with the substantial theoretical and practical nourishment which corresponds to their personal needs, to the demands of the moment and to their future responsibilities;

²² C 42, C 48

²³ C 30

²⁴ C 9

²⁵ FR 22

²⁶ Last circular of John Mary de la Mennais

- to help them interiorise the values of consecrated life;
- to evaluate the outcomes and assess if the candidates meet the demands of the Church and of the Congregation.

In order to exercise their ministry effectively, those in charge of formation must have a few specific qualities:

- human aptitudes such as empathy*, intuition and openness;;
- tested experience of God;
- openness for team work with other facilitators;
- love of the Congregation and knowledge of its charism and tradition;
- specific formation for the ministry.

The Formation Community

13. Formation is the immediate function of the community of formation. The community welcomes the director of formation or the formation team to whom it extends its cooperation. The community attains its objective to the extent that it allows its members to grow in their fidelity to the Lord in keeping with the charism of the Institute. Such a community endeavours to promote life by creating an ambience of brotherly love, of prayer, of apostolic work and, by the very fact, a sense of belonging to the Congregation.

The community forms the candidates through the following means:

- personal relationships and emotional ties free from all selfish and childish expectations;
- growing awareness of a common charismatic identity;
- regular and stable community life expressed through moments of prayer, reflection and joyful social interaction;
- instruments which promote the communal dimension of life (community project, community discernment, accompaniment), and those which foster growth even through shortcomings and weaknesses (fraternal correction, revision of life) ;
- love for the mission, and preferential love for the poor ;
- a Gospel frame of reference which inspires the candidates' decisions.

The community has recourse to dialogue as a means of discernment and of fostering co-responsibility for enhanced personal and community growth and development.

Other Agents

14. Other than the members of the community of formation, various agents intervene as complementary agents of formation: teachers, spiritual directors, pastoral counsellors and others.

b) Inspirational Models

The Founders

15. By recognising John Mary de la Mennais and Gabriel Deshayes as founders of the Congregation and giving her approval to the Congregation founded by them for the furtherance of their spirit and mission, the Church has acknowledged their charism as a form of Christian life that can be shared by many others and a road to holiness for the People of God.

Today, Brothers live in a situation and a social context different from those of its origins. They nevertheless feel indebted to the Founders for their charism, for the example of their life, for their writings, especially those of John Mary de la Mennais, which fashioned the spirit of the budding Congregation and determined the characteristics of the Mennaisian charismatic identity.

In formation, today and at all times, updating that spirit requires creativity, originality and spontaneity.

The Congregation

16. Born within the Church, called and consecrated under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Congregation has arisen in order to reproduce the form of life of Jesus and of his apostles in the service of education.

Its charism, an experience of the Spirit, has been received, deepened, developed and enriched by the different generations of Brothers, - and at present of lay persons - giving meaning and life to the Mennaisian project.

The Rule of life

17. The Rule of Life is not a lifeless text but it is a tool for renewal. It presents an updated version of the charism of the Congregation as well as the ecclesial dimension of its mission. This is why the Rule of Life and the various texts of the Congregation should be read, savoured and assimilated by each Brother.

THE FACTORS OF FORMATION

Realities (persons and structures) exert an influence on personal structuring and maturation and on the formation process. They may be internal or external to the person.

They are not, as a rule, the product of formal training. Some are hereditary while others are part of the natural or social make-up, independent of any particular formal training.

Where possible, they may become part of a formation programme so that they grow to be mechanisms* and means of formation.

a) Internal Factors : The Person

Physical Factors

18. Formation of the whole person involves a physical dimension: age, health, gender, bodily conditions. These factors have an influence on the development of the person and on the mastery of that person's qualities, aptitudes and potentialities.

Given the importance of health on personal equilibrium throughout life, it is necessary to ensure physical exercise, sports, a balanced diet, habits of hygiene, cleanliness, sobriety and rest.

Psychological Factors

19. The psychological factors concern the personality of the subjects in its various dimensions. The influence of the psychological factors is crucial where that person's behaviour is concerned.

The Constitutions (C 54) list a few of these characteristics: open, firm and sociable character, sound judgement and adequate intelligence, interest in the education of youth and good physical and psychological health rooted in a wholesome heredity.

Discernment must give special attention to vocational motivations, to the ability to live in community and to emotional maturity.

Factors Associated with Youth

20. It is necessary to pay special attention to particular characteristics displayed or experienced by candidates: superficiality, activism, fickleness, short-lived commitments, weak Christian convictions, precocious sexual experiences, broken family, etc. These are the result of the influence of the ambient culture on them and of the values it engenders in various places.

These values discerned and vitalized by the Gospel, will contribute to shaping religious life and the mission in the years to come.

b) External factors: The Environment

The Family

21. Socialization first takes place in the family. The Christian family, domestic church, is the privileged place for the awakening of vocations.

As far as possible, the family of the candidate must be associated with the itinerary of the young person at all stages of his formation.

The family is a key element in vocational discernment. It should be taken into account in the formation process, especially as regards its

influence on the motivations and the behaviour of the candidate as he seeks to integrate the new family to which he has been called.

Society and Culture

22. Largely through the media, the present complex social reality, through both its positive and negative characteristics, exercises a more and more significant influence on the maturation process of persons. Besides, the face of society varies depending on where we live. This in turn gives rise to various ways of understanding life and history.

That is why the Brother has to train himself to listening to the Spirit in the Word of God, in mental prayer, but also through events in history and in the culture and the life of peoples.

DYNAMISMS AND MEANS

As regards certain realities, they imply formal training from the start and bring invigorating energy to bear on the formation process. They can be the work of formation agents or the result of factors of formation.

a) Accompaniment

23. John Mary de la Mennais spent much time visiting and meeting the Brothers, providing them practical, sensible guidance, either verbally or through correspondence. Brothers went to him openly and trustfully. He remains an inspiration and a model for personal accompaniment in formation.

In initial formation, “persons accompanying candidates are more important than facilities”²⁷. Personal accompaniment remains a means by which growth may be promoted throughout ongoing formation.

In the broad sense, spiritual accompaniment consists of every kind of assistance which sheds light on, sustains and guides a Brother in his

²⁷ FR 44

commitment to discern the will of God in order to bring his life to completeness. It can take several forms:

- Spiritual accompaniment (spiritual direction) implemented during the initial formation stage by way of frequent dialogue with the formation director is the means most often recommended by the Church and the Congregation. “Guided by the Holy Spirit and helped by a competent spiritual director or by his habitual confessor, the Brother gradually discovers the path to God.”²⁸

The aim of that accompaniment is to help the person :

- a) to know and accept oneself and to attain full and free self possession;
 - b) to achieve objectivity of outlook on the road of conversion to God through the attention one pays to the experience of God, to listening to his Word, to personal and community prayer, to various discoveries one makes of Christ’s presence, to a discerning reading of events, to a sense of belonging to the Congregation, to one’s apostolic experiences, trials, crises and temptations...
- Other complementary forms of accompaniment exist: frequent meetings with the formation director, regular confession and everything which, in a community of formation, helps the person to grow: revision of life, times of celebration and sharing the Word of God, etc.
- The working out and the faithful observance of the personal project is another means which can help vocational maturity.
- Accompaniment by the group is complementary to individual accompaniment and takes on great importance in vocational discernment. It is characterized by a climate of educational and sound relationships, by life experiences and by shared responsibility in the common project, all of which are factors which help the candidate to work out his own choices and his personal criteria in response to his vocation. Group accompaniment guides, stimulates and sustains what each person lives, without robbing the candidate’s decisions of their personal character.

²⁸ D 91

b) The Word of God and the Sacraments

The Word of God

24. The candidate finds the source and the culmination of his formation in the Word of God which provides the knowledge of Jesus and makes possible identification with him. “It is most certain, dear friend, that in order to know Jesus well, it is necessary, following his very own advice, to fathom the Scriptures.”²⁹

The Word of God will reveal to the Brother the profile and the fulfilment of his vocation, for the Master will call him in the same way that he called Abraham, Moses, the prophets or Mary. Daily exposure to the Word of God will enable him to observe events in a new light and to see his life correspond perfectly to God’s plan of salvation. This he will do through the *Lectio divina**.

Regular listening to the Word of God introduces the Brother daily into a heart-to-heart encounter with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who configures him gradually to the Beloved. This is the object of mental prayer*.³⁰

At the end of the day, it is in the light of the same Word of God that the Brother assesses his deeds and actions to see whether or not they have conformed to the Lord’s invitation and to adjust his life to what He asks of him. This he does through the *Lectio vitae**.

As a result, the charism and the reality which Brothers live shed a powerful light on the way they read and study the Word of God.

The Sacraments

25. Our Rule Life energetically underscores the importance of the Eucharist on which, together with the Word of God, is built the spiritual life of the community. The Eucharist, “sign of unity and bond of charity,”³¹ is, indeed, the summit of fraternal life.

²⁹ To Bruté de Rémur, March 2nd 1809

³⁰ D 86

³¹ SC 47

But for the Eucharist to exercise its transforming power, one must, from a pedagogical point of view:

- make it the centre of the whole of one's life, not confining it to a sacramental celebration ;
- become aware of the apostolic dimension of the Eucharist ;
- make the lives of people part of the eucharistic celebration (their struggles and sufferings, their hopes and successes), together with one's being and one's action ;
- discover the Eucharist as a force for peace, reconciliation and justice ;
- learn to adapt liturgies to situations.

26. The sacrament of reconciliation plays an essential role in the growth process for it involves a constant concern with personal and community conversion.

The celebration of the penitential rite by the community and its frequent personal practice make for the joyful experience of the Father's forgiveness and the building up of a *forgiven* and *forgiving* community according to the recommendation of the first Rule to the Brothers : "Should dissension arise among them, no matter how slight, they should make it a point to reconcile themselves before evening prayer."³²

c) *Studies*

27. Studies aim at forming the Mennaisian apostle. They are decided upon in dialogue with the superiors so that they correspond to the requirements of the Congregation and are in harmony with the needs of the Church, and should not be programmed "with a view to achieving personal goals, as if they were a means of wrongly understood self-fulfilment".³³

The mission entails professional formation. The studies leading to it take place before and after the novitiate, particularly during the first years of appointment to the community. They last throughout the active life of the Brother in the form of professional and pedagogical upgrading.

³² Rule of 1823

³³ FR 65

The pedagogical aspect must be consistent with the Mennaisian pedagogy which should be included in the Mennaisian formation as a whole.

d) Integration

Integration in the Community

28. Integration in the community begins during the years prior to the novitiate. It is enhanced particularly during the novitiate, and then during the years of apostolic activity at which time it becomes more meaningful. A sufficiently long period of integration in the apostolic community is necessary before the perpetual profession.

Apostolic Integration

Taking on more and more importance during the final stages of initial formation, apostolic integration should follow a sustained progression. Retirement years signal a break and make necessary a new apostolic integration.

Social Integration

Social integration, associated with the mission of educators and to *preferential love for the poor*, is necessary for the apostolate. Hence, young people, from the start of formation, should acquire an intense sensitivity for the needs of the destitute. The location of the houses of formation and a frugal and simple lifestyle will facilitate integration among the impoverished and foster a feeling of solidarity.

2

THE POSTULATE

THE POSTULATE

29. The postulate constitutes a period of specific preparation to the novitiate. Even if it is only a preliminary stage, it must not be considered merely as a period of transition. It has particular features and a consistency as an itinerary of formation which is more all-encompassing and more challenging than previous stages. It must be of sufficient duration (ideally at least one year) to give candidates time to live the transitions which they will be invited to go through.

“The postulate provides a more direct preparation to the novitiate through a deeper experience of Christian life and a finer discernment of the Lord’s call.”³⁴

One reaches that stage through a variety of ways which the Province project anticipates in its youth and vocational pastoral programme. These approaches will have given the candidates some basic initiation to life as a Brother, some knowledge of what that specific vocation entails and the beginnings of guidance.

Candidates who wish to be admitted to the postulate should have attained the level of studies and the diploma which will grant them access to university studies as required by different countries.

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES

a) The Human Dimension

30. To attain a level of human maturity which will allow the subject to benefit from the experience of the novitiate.

b) The Christian Dimension

At the level of the doctrine and of the practice, to deepen one’s Christian initiation and the knowledge of one’s specific vocation in the Church.

³⁴ C 61

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

To acquire sufficient knowledge of the Mennaisian life and mission to make a first choice in their favour, including the gradual separations and commitments which they entail.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND MEANS

a) The Human Dimension

The Specific Objectives

31.

- Continue the process of self-knowledge and of self-acceptance through a greater awareness of one's personal resources and limitations.
- Give particular attention to emotional and sexual maturity.
- Implement and nurture the ability for community living.
- Grow in one's capacity for reflection and adopt a sufficiently critical approach to oneself, others and reality in general.
- Become aware of, and to engage in a rereading of, one's personal, family and social history.

The Means

32.

- A complete medical check-up of the candidate.
- An in-depth psychological evaluation for an increased knowledge of self and a more thorough assessment of innermost motives with a view to a fuller integration of all these aspects into the spiritual dimension, and thus better answer God's call.
- If necessary, counselling is offered to a candidate.
- The use of natural means to promote physical and mental health such as sports, hygiene, artistic activities, hobbies and love of nature.

RATIO INSTITUTIONIS

- Various occasions for the person in formation to make commitments and to see them through for the development of his creativity, his responsibility and his autonomy.
- The assimilation of certain basic attitudes : sincerity and transparency, free gift of self, willingness to serve, gradual and serene giving up of emotional or financial security, the practice of asceticism through self-discipline and the accomplishment of one's duties.
- Awareness of one's affectivity with a view to unifying and integrating it gradually. This is a life-long achievement but the first steps must be lived in a perceptible way at this stage.
- Initiation to the practice of silence.
- Self-discipline towards progress in the mastery of one's impulses and achieving coherence among one's actions, words and attitudes.
- Assessment of one's feelings, emotions and desires as a way of testing them against the values one wishes to adopt.
- Formation to personalisation* in such a way that, with the assistance of the director, difficulties and conflicting elements in one's history may be examined in a serene perspective so that situations requiring it may be played down and cleared.
- Taking stock of relationships with family and friends with a view to adopting a realistic and constructive attitude towards them.
- Nurturing bonds of affection (affection and friendship) towards people, particularly community companions ; maintaining positive interpersonal relationships ; having a high regard for marriage and the vow of chastity.
- An appreciation for the worthwhile elements of one's culture ; openness to other cultures and other ways of thinking ; artistic sensitivity.
- The promotion of courtesy and of cordiality, of a spirit of reconciliation and of acceptance of others, as well as the ability to forgive through overcoming antipathies and prejudices and overlooking resentment.
- The acquisition of an adequate intellectual formation and of a personal method of study, of reading and of research.

b) The Christian Dimension

The Specific Objectives

33.

- Progress in the theory and the practice of Christian life.
- Discover gradually the image of Jesus Christ ; become aware of the distorted perceptions of God and begin to clear them up.
- Open oneself to a personal relationship with God.
- Nurture a life of prayer, an appreciation for the sacraments and Gospel values.
- Embody progressively the Mennaisian spirituality, in close solidarity with the most destitute, children and youth.
- Deepen an authentic Marian devotion.

The Means

34.

- Anchor one's experience of faith in personal and community prayer.
- Confront one's life in the light of a better acquaintance with the Word of God through a growing appreciation for times of silence, of contemplation and of heartfelt listening which prepare for daily encounters with Jesus Christ in the sacraments.
- Initiation to the practice of prayer :
 - a) vocal prayers, especially with the use of liturgical and biblical prayers ;
 - b) contemplation of the presence of God in Brothers, in nature, in events and in one's own life ;
 - c) shared prayer as an introduction to the communal experience of God ;
 - d) moments of personal prayer and, especially during the postulate, initiation to prayer based on the Word of God (mainly the Gospels and the Psalms) to develop an attitude of listening and responding.

- Discover the figure of Jesus Christ through systematic catechesis for a first synthesis of the truths of faith by way of several approaches : biblical, liturgical, sacramental, missionary and Marian.

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

The Specific Objectives

35.

- Become aware of the call from God in past experiences and integrate them at this stage.
- Be acquainted with the basic elements of the spirit of the Congregation and live them in common with the other members of the formation community.
- Get to know the Founders, the realities of the Province and the main periods in the history of the Congregation.
- Develop a missionary spirit and attitudes of openness to the world.

The Means

36.

- Initiation to the spirit of the Institute through meetings with the director, exchanges with Brothers in charge of formation and interactions with other Brothers. The communal experience of the postulate allows the candidate to see how he lives the Mennaisian spirit in a concrete way : spirit of faith, of charity, of abnegation and of humility³⁵.
- An initial contact with the Founders through reading their biographies, episodes in the history of the Institute and of the Province, together with other biographies and selected texts from General Chapters.
- The opportunity for the candidate, through his participation in the Mennaisian patrimony, to clarify his perception of the gift which he has received and to assess how he reacts to this personal call in the perspective of a possible life-long commitment.

³⁵ Cf. C 3

- Participation in some apostolic activities typical of the Congregation.

DISCERNMENT

37. The aim of the postulate is above all else one of discernment, that is, gaining awareness on the part of both the candidate and the Institute as to the authenticity of a call to follow Jesus in keeping with the Mennaisian way of life³⁶.

38. It is a matter of exercising a human judgement over a divine vocation. In the assessment that is carried out, one attempts to arrive at a moral certainty*. That certainty relies on:

- signs of maturity and of aptitude ;
- tangible signs of the candidate's ability to develop the aptitudes required by this kind of life ;
- signs of a right intention ;
- signs of generosity to commit oneself in the service of the Church in our Institute.

39. In order to assess the root of motivations, to assist in the discernment of candidates and to enter more deeply into the vocational itinerary, accompaniment takes on crucial importance.

To that end, the person in charge of formation:

- enters into a deep relationship with the candidate to listen to his personal and family history, the experiences he has lived, the difficulties he has encountered, his hopes, his fears, all the while being on the lookout for signs of the will of God ;
- pays attention to the workings of the candidate's emotional and relational life which foster openness to others, self-giving and mutual forgiveness, friendship, cooperation and pursuit of the common good ;
- knows how to manage group dynamics, the tensions that can emerge within the group and in the community as a result of disparities of cultures, ages, mentalities ;

³⁶ C 61

- communicates with enthusiasm the values of the Mennaisian spirituality, specially love for education, and accompanies very closely the apostolic experiences which the young people carry out, providing them with appropriate quality training ;
- states clearly the option for poor children and youths and urges candidates in that direction by encouraging them to make some choices in favour of austerity.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AT THE END OF THE POSTULATE

a) The Human Dimension

40. At the end of the postulate, the candidate :

- can take stock of his resources and of his frailties and acknowledge his fundamental inconsistencies* ;
- has come, in the area of affectivity-sexuality, to an acceptance of his sexual identity and can deal comfortably with his emotional and sexual make-up ;
- has adopted, from a relational point of view, a lifestyle where empathy prevails and shows the ability to give up certain types of relationships in order to adopt new and lasting ones ;
- has the ability to adopt a renewed perspective on his personal and family history in a spirit of reconciliation which enables him to view his life's history as a continuous whole rather than a collection of isolated fragments ;
- has acquired and demonstrated a sufficient degree of freedom to make informed choices.

b) The Christian Dimension

41. At the end of his postulate, the candidate :

- has gained an awareness of his erroneous perceptions of God and has started to redress them ; he can distinguish between magical religiosity and faith (ways of praying, sense of sin, guilt, blamelessness, etc ;

- enters more and more into a personal relationship with God, moving beyond mere emotions, mysticism ; he tends to have no reservations, no secrets with regards to God towards whom he shows total availability in an attitude of surrender ;
- can identify signs of the presence of Jesus in his life and discern therein signs of a vocation ;
- has acquired the knowledge and basic practice of Christian life : credo, knowledge of salvation history, the Eucharist, etc. ;
- is moving from an attitude of consumerism to an attitude of participation in the building-up of the community³⁷;

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

42. At the **end** of the postulate, the candidate :

- recognizes himself in the main Mennaisian characteristics as a result of daily experiences, gradually identifying himself to the charism itself ;
- knows the broad lines of the Founders' history and those of the Congregation ;
- has shown a profound interest for children and youth through varied service activities ;
- has become gradually acquainted with Mennaisian educational activities through practical experience.

³⁷ Cf. FLC 24

3

THE NOVICIATE

THE NOVITIATE

43. Because of the crucial importance the novitiate holds for the Congregation, particular attention is given to this period of formation.

“A novice seeks to develop his knowledge of Christ and his intimacy with him, to acquire a deeper appreciation of his Mennaisian vocation and to assess its requirements. In order to obtain a greater love of God, he strives to practise the evangelical counsels and to integrate in his being the contemplative and the active dimensions of the apostolic religious life. He studies the history and activities of the Congregation and the life and achievements of its Founders. Under the guidance of the master of novices, in a fraternal community, he prepares himself through reflection and prayer to make an informed and mature personal decision.”³⁸

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

a) The Human Dimension

44. . To progress in human maturity and, following verification of the authenticity of his vocation, to chose freely and consciously the Mennaisian religious way of life with all its concrete exigencies.

b) The Christian Dimension

To walk in the footsteps of Jesus who was poor, chaste and obedient, in keeping with the Mennaisian charism, while recognising the concrete implications for one’s lifestyle.

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

To progressively make one’s own the charism through knowledge and practice of the Constitutions, and to translate the Mennaisian spirituality into one’s life.

³⁸ C 67

THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND THE MEANS

a) The Human Dimension

The Specific Objectives

45.

- Pursue the process of personalisation* integrating the human and spiritual dimensions. God receives the novice as he is, reconciles him with all the facets of his history, helps him to grow with all his frailties and takes him through the experience of salvation. Such a process requires an atmosphere of freedom, of trust, of autonomy and of responsibility.
- Redefine his identity by concentrating all of his resources on his vocational choice ;
- Create the conditions to break up with his previous environment, thus allowing the fuller emergence of the Absolute, the emotional blossoming of his relationship with God, a deeper respect for community life and for the Mennaisian charism.
- Open oneself to community life, to service, to communal manual work and care of the house in a family spirit. The commitment to participate in the building-up of the community in everyday life is a self-discipline which makes the solidity of one's motivations grow.
- Practise living in silence, without which the presence of God cannot be experienced ; silence fosters listening to the Word, focuses one's life on what is truly worthwhile and promotes reflection.

The Means

46.

- The setting up of a personal life project.
- The work - already begun, and sustained by continued personal accompaniment - in the field of self-knowledge and of personality development, by confronting the values to which the novice is attached with his daily attitudes, so as to discover the root cause (the central

needs *) of contradictions between what he lives and what he wishes to live.

- The pursuit of the steps taken during the postulate in the areas of affectivity and of sexuality.
- The learning of the judicious and moderate use of means of communication, together with the integration of periods of silence in daily tasks, helps the novice unify his person in a world which all too often promotes dispersal.
- The gradual separation from family and friends in order to foster the advent of a new sense of belonging.
- The evaluation of the internal experience of separation : attitudes, counter-values, innermost motivations at odds with a Christ-like lifestyle.

b) The Christian Dimension

“To develop his knowledge of Christ and his intimacy with him...”³⁹ : It is this personal encounter with Christ, perceived as a living person and a friend, which is the fundamental aim of all itinerary of formation.

The Specific Objectives

47.

- Learn gradually to hand over one's life to Christ, to welcome the mystery of the cross and to acquire the Gospel criteria by which to judge events and experiences.
- Unify one's existence around the option for Christ who was chaste, poor and obedient as potential of growth in freedom and especially as a response to faithful love. “In order to obtain a greater love of God, he strives to practise the evangelical counsels.”⁴⁰
- Advance in the internal intelligence of the gratuitousness of God's love. So that his loving relationship with God liberates him and, at the same time, so that he becomes totally available, the novice gives up his own will and enters God's project. "The only thing which I require

³⁹ C 67

⁴⁰ C67

strictly (for admission to the novitiate) is for the novice to leave his own will at the door."⁴¹

- To assimilate intellectually and experientially the biblical, theological and spiritual contents of the Christian and religious life, which enables the candidate to attain the specific objectives of the novitiate and to answer the call of his vocation.

The means

48.

- The practice of *Lectio divina**, the path to a relationship with God, understood as a structured process which fosters concentration of the heart.
- Initiation to regular personal prayer, particularly mental prayer*, source of a more intimate relationship with God and sustenance for spiritual growth.
- Initiation into an embodied spiritual experience grounds faith in everyday life, gives a human quality to small things, views reality from the standpoint of salvation and of God's presence, develops a prayer centred on the Kingdom. To this end, the daily practice of the *lectio vitae** takes on special importance, through the new perspective it sheds on the bonds created with people.
- A deepening of the liturgical sense which makes present the mysteries of Christ, through training for the celebration of the divine office, of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation.
- The example of Mary, Mother and Teacher, through the espousing of a religious way of life adapted to our time and which helps discover the best ways to be signs and expressions of God's love for children and the youth.
- Responsible participation in the elaboration and in the realisation of the community project as well as in the various structures of community growth (weekly meetings, community discernment, fraternal correction, sharing of the Word, daily activities, etc.): all of these are

⁴¹ Letter to Brother Abel Lucas, April 18, 1848.

favourable occasions to promote a sense of belonging and of communion, and to experiment obedience as co-responsibility in community choices.

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

The Specific Objectives

49.

- “Acquire a deeper appreciation of his Mennaisian vocation and assess its requirements”⁴² creatively for today’s world.
- “Strive to integrate in his being the contemplative and the active dimensions of the apostolic religious life”⁴³ as basic requirements for our Mennaisian ministerial* spirituality.
- Interiorise the values of the Mennaisian spirituality, as sources of joy in one’s vocation, as expressions of membership in the Congregation and of love for this founding word: “Let little children come to me.”

The Means

50.

- The study of the historical development of the Congregation, bringing to light its historical roots, its presence in various countries, its openness to missionary work.
- The deepening of the Mennaisian spirituality and charism, particularly by means of the Rule of life, to discover in it the expression of one’s own new identity.
- A contact with the reality of children, young people and the poor, to awaken a responsiveness directed to this reality, to develop the psychology of one who is sent*, and to provoke an appropriate answer.
- Participation in coordinated pastoral work (catechesis, liturgical and pastoral animation of young people) to live the “sense of the Church”,

⁴² C 67

⁴³ C 67

a dimension very much present in the mind of our Founders from the origins.

THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AT THE END OF THE NOVITIATE

a) The Human Dimension

51. At the end of the novitiate, the candidate:

- has managed, through working on his own personality, to integrate in his way of living that part of the fundamental inconsistency* which characterises him;
- is capable of clarifying his motivations through constant discernment over himself. With the help of his director / spiritual guide, he is in a position, through telling signs, to evaluate his self-denial, to play down his self-importance, and to recognise his joyful trust in the Lord of life and of history, his joy and his openness at sharing the mission with others;
- has learnt to love himself the way he is, which inclines him to live more serenely his affectivity and his sexuality in celibacy ;
- becomes less and less emotionally dependent on his family and more and more attached to his new religious family ;
- entertains simple and open relationships with all members of the community, in a positive sense ;
- has reconciled himself with his own history, perceives all the good that can be drawn from negative events and understands that even they can translate into a history of salvation.

b) The Christian Dimension

52. At the end of the novitiate, the candidate:

- is capable of reading his personal history in the perspective of the history of salvation ;
- reconciles prayer and mission in a unified life project ; he leads his everyday life in the light of the liberating presence of the Lord,

avoiding the pitfalls of a disembodied spiritualism or of an empty activism ;

- nurtures his relationship with the person of Jesus as a living person and identifies gradually with Jesus as if by connaturality*;
- has already adopted in his own life attitudes, ways of doing and sentiments that witness to a commitment to chastity, poverty and obedience ;
- initiates himself to personal discernment of the impulses that he feels, of the motives that guide him, and prayer becomes a means by which to direct his life, no matter what the circumstances may be ;
- Mary has become for him a model of interiority and of integration* for his life : “Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.”⁴⁴

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

53. At the end of the novitiate, the candidate:

- has started to make the theoretical and practical contents of the Mennaisian spirituality part of his life ;
- has developed a team spirit through tying in the history of his own vocation to the history of the vast torrent to which he contributes his dynamism
- has experienced the spirituality of bonds* ;
- has taken some distance with regards to his family and has achieved a greater sense of belonging to his new family ;

⁴⁴ Cf. Lk 2, 19.51

THE MASTER OF NOVICES

54-

- Appointed by the Superior General with the consent of his council, the Master of novices is concerned with his own ongoing formation as regards human and spiritual growth, religious life, Mennaisian identity, advances provoked by the Spirit in the Congregation, such as the shared mission. To that end, he informs himself, studies, lives and teaches in keeping with the orientations of the last General Chapters;
- He pays close attention to each individual so that each progresses at his own pace, depending on his situation and on his level of maturity ;
- By means of the regular and frequent personal interview, guided by the family spirit and the quest of God's will on people, he accompanies the novice in his relationships with the Lord, with himself and with the others, and he helps him to view his history and his limits in the light of faith.
- Looking at the world from the standpoint of the poor, sensitive to the difficulties and to the hardships of people, he sets up a simple lifestyle and, with the community, studies possible forms of commitment for the novices.
- He promotes in the novices the development of a “sense of the Church”, a deeper understanding of the Constitutions and of the evangelical counsels ; he encourages them on the path of free adhesion to Christ who calls them to dedicate their lives for young people.
- He guides the novices towards an experience of the apostolic mission ; he helps them to reconcile work with apostolic activity.
- He creates the necessary conditions for the novices to :
 - a) experiment, within the framework of the shared mission, the enrichment it entails for the Mennaisian family ;
 - b) open themselves to the demands of the ecclesial community and to sharing with other congregations ;
 - c) be sensitised to the socio-cultural realities and to young people's ways of communicating and frame of reference.

NOVITIATES COMMON TO PROVINCES

55. By decision of the Superior General, with the consent of his council⁴⁵, and to satisfy the demand of numbers or of formation, the experience of inter-provincial novitiates can be very profitable. To that end, certain conditions apply :

- the presence of a Brother from each Province concerned ;
- the presence of one Master of novices dedicated exclusively to that ministry ;
- the adequate coordination of all the formation personnel, for specific and complementary involvement, to turn to good account the resources of all into a positive means of formation.

COMMON NOVITIATES AMONG CONGREGATIONS

56. Owing to particular circumstances, the Superior General, with the consent of his council, can authorise the establishment of a novitiate in association with other congregations. A number of conditions apply:

- the absolute necessity of a Mennaisian novice Master ;
- the formation of the novices according to the specific charism, guaranteed by the Master and his collaborators, even if a general inter-congregational formation is offered ;
- the establishment of a community proper to the novitiate, that is, an authentic community of formation, made up of novices, the Master of novices and other Brothers who may be involved in other ministries ;
- where inter-congregational novices are housed on the same premises, places for formation to, and the deepening of, a sense of belonging should be made available.

⁴⁵ C 65

4

THE SCHOLASTICATE

THE SCHOLASTICATE

57. The aim of the scholasticate, the formation stage which follows immediately upon the novitiate, is the deepening and the continuation of the initiation set in motion during the previous stage⁴⁶.

58. In general, formation at the scholasticate should last for three years, in appropriate houses, in a dynamic formation community with competent educators⁴⁷. Young Brothers are accompanied and guided by a Director appointed by the Superior General with the consent of his council⁴⁸.

59. Faced with the requirements of this stage of formation, some Provinces may find it impossible to organise it in a satisfactory manner. Inter-Province scholasticates may then be a feasible solution as long as animation teams are well constituted, in agreement with all parties concerned.

60. Depending on particular provincial circumstances, a Brother scholastic may integrate a community which makes it a priority, among its other apostolic commitments, to provide him with means of formation and of accompaniment.

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES

a) The Human Dimension

61. Through daily coming to grips with reality, continue pursuing full maturity while working at a better understanding of self, at building up the community, and at reassessing one's personal projects.

b) The Christian Dimension

Grow in an intense spiritual life which integrates prayer, studies, the community and initiation to apostolic commitment.

⁴⁶ Cf. D 146

⁴⁷ FR 60

⁴⁸ D 146

c) *The Mennaisian Dimension*

Identify with the Congregation and its choices, make oneself apt for the mission and prepare to exercise the ministry of a religious educator.

THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND THE MEANS

a) *The Human Dimension*

The Specific Objectives

62.

- Attain a realistic level of personal equilibrium, capable of meeting and integrating frustrations and conflicts, looking at reality with the eyes of hope, without imagining one's vocation as pure ideal.
- Overcome both the crisis of realism and some emotional crises by means of total honesty and discernment.
- Establish a rhythm and a balance in his twofold responsibility as student and young Brother undergoing spiritual maturation; ensure personal constancy toward studies and sensitivity to culture as requirements for one's vocation.

The Means

63.

- A structured, systematic and ongoing programme of formation on a daily basis.
- Personal accompaniment is a prerequisite for this period of formation: a Brother is officially designated for this accompaniment. That Brother does not confine himself to psycho-pedagogical accompaniment; he also helps the scholastic to discern the action of God in himself and provides adequate support for discerning the promptings of the Spirit.
- Community accompaniment, given that the student-Brother lives the experience of integration in a community. Through community sharing, periodic revision in the light of the Word of God, by way of community and of personal fraternal correction, the trainee learns to

deal with difficulties as well as to find and take his place in his environment.

- The community of formation, through word and deed, becomes a school of realism, of mutual respect and of co-responsibility, discerning between an ideal vision of the community and a perception which views the community as a gift of the Spirit to build up from day to day⁴⁹.

b) The Christian Dimension

The Specific Objectives

64.

- Grow in identification with Christ through a filial relationship with the Father, an identification which gives meaning and depth to life and sheds a new perspective on reality.
- Unify the whole of life around the central core of the religious consecration ; progress in the acquisition of an “apostolic spirituality”, through faithfulness in the service of children and of young people, this being the hallmark of faithfulness to God.⁵⁰
- Continue the quest for a preferential relationship with Christ through community living, studies and work.
- Become aware that through his dedication to God, the Brother has integrated the mission entrusted to the Congregation by the Church.
- Learn to live in full communion with the Church understood as People of God on the move and as mystery of communion for the various charisms.

The Means

65.

- The habit of prayer at the heart of everyday life to promote interiority and give depth to life, through an attitude of personal responsibility and within the framework of the dialogue of accompaniment.

⁴⁹ C 37

⁵⁰ GC 2000, p. 13

- The practice of daily Eucharist at the centre of consecrated life as the unifying factor of life and of action.
- The daily rereading of life through *Lectio vitae** for a clearer perception of how the network of relationships lived in everyday situations can be unified and directed by the loving will of God.
- A serious programme of studies (curriculum) in keeping with the expectations and the requirements of the contemporary world.
- In the programme of studies, special attention should be given to theological studies (biblical, dogmatic, pastoral, religious life⁵¹), if they have not been carried out before, and to Mennaisian studies. To this programme may be integrated a few hours of complementary professional studies in keeping with sought-after competencies and the ends of the Institute. A detailed curriculum, developed under the responsibility of the Provincial and his council, must be validated by the Superior General and his council.
- A structured programme of studies and personal reading as means of growing in the following of Jesus so that everything harmonises for a better understanding of the science of faith and of the Gospel.
- An ever better grasp of the importance of the community project, of the time given to its development, of its evaluation to « help us move toward God together and accomplish his mission »⁵².

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

The Specific Objectives

- 66.** Prepare oneself intensively for the Mennaisian mission, in solidarity with one's Brothers, through full participation in the life of the Province.
- Start living the Mennaisian spirituality which leads one to wish “to reproduce the image of Jesus, as Brothers in the service of the People of God, especially youth”⁵³, particularly the most destitute.

⁵¹ Cf. FR 61

⁵² Rule of 1823

⁵³ GC 2000, p. 14

- Show openness to the particular sensitivities of the Founders so as to adopt their perspective on the realities of this world and to commit oneself to the apostolic mission which takes into account those same realities.

The Means

67.

- Initiation to apostolic commitment and to ecclesial and social experiences in accordance with the Mennaisian charism ; this is by no means a concession to, but an essential aspect of, the formation process.
- Accompaniment and orientation in apostolic responsibilities in keeping with the objectives of formation and the needs of the Congregation's mission.
- Taking into account the shared mission and compassion for the poor in the Mennaisian formation and in apostolic experiences.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AT THE END OF THE SCHOLASTICATE

a) The Human Dimension

68. At the end of the scholasticate, the Brother :

- shows he can live in harmony with Gospel values rather than follow his inconsistencies* ;
- is capable of seeing his everyday history in the light of the history of salvation ;
- can take control of his own life and can assume his responsibilities before God and men ;
- has adopted a realistic perspective on his life and his commitment ;
- can carry through to a successful conclusion the commitment to his studies and can integrate the community in view of the mission.

b) The Christian Dimension

69. At the end of the scholasticate, the Brother:

- unites contemplation and action, is wary of activism and unifies all his actions (prayers, studies, work) in view of the mission ;
- has developed a serious personal project centred on the positive and harmonious experience of his vows ;
- has personalised* the spirituality through the adoption of a life project which corresponds to his personality and tendencies ;
- has developed an open and fraternal attitude and participates actively in community life.

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

70. At the end of the scholasticate, the Brother :

- has acquired a deeper knowledge of John Mary de la Mennais and of the history of the Congregation, and has a better understanding of the Rule of Life ;
- has made his own the concept of a body for the mission, and shows availability in that respect ; he understands the value of the shared mission and has a good grasp of the internationality of the Congregation ;

THE ORGANISATION OF THE SCHOLASTICATE

71. Considering the various and varying situations lived in our Congregation, we should look for modest centres of formation which foster options in keeping with Gospel values, in a stable environment conducive to reflection, studies and brotherly living.

72. In some places, it may be advisable to set up inter-provincial scholasticates for groups to be sufficiently numerous to ensure quality formation, prior to which a clear and well-defined consensus should be reached among the Provinces concerned.

73. When selecting establishments over which the Congregation has no direct authority, preference should be given to quality of teaching and to the importance given to the vocation of Brothers and to the specific mission of educators.

5

UNTIL THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

UNTIL THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

BROTHERS INTEGRATED INTO AN APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

74. The general objectives and the elements previously indicated are valid for this stage, the characteristics of which need to be specified.

a) The Specific Characteristics

The Human dimension

75. Grow in autonomy and mastery of self as one integrates the new realities of active apostolic life, using existing norms applied since the beginning of formation as a Brother.

The Christian Dimension

Acquire an ever deeper identification of one's attitudes and discernment criteria with those of the Gospel, with a view to assuming, in a fully responsible manner, one's final commitment to the Lord Jesus.

The Mennaisian Dimension

Make one's own, for life, the Congregation, the spirituality and the mission to which one identifies fully and by which one wishes to live.

b) The Itinerary of the Period Preceding the Perpetual Vows

The Community

76. The young Brother is welcomed in a community which constitutes itself into a formation community. His mandate from the Provincial Superior does not consist only in accomplishing a specific apostolic task ; he is also embarking on a new stage in his formation.

Welcoming a young Brother in its midst represents an important challenge for the community and is for the latter a means of ongoing formation.

The Person in Charge

77. The Provincial or the Vice-Provincial names a Brother in charge of accompanying the young Brother during that period. He can delegate this responsibility to another Brother.

The Duration

78. It is important that the young Brother, during some years at least, live the full experience of a community engaged in the educational ministry in the school, in the service of the poor, so that he can become attached to his ministry*. Completing his studies or assuming responsibilities will take place at some other time. The experience of a few years dedicated exclusively to the ministry* of education is crucial to this period.

The Structures of Formation

79. The Provincial, in association with the formation team of each Province, establishes the formation programme to be followed in and with the community.

As far as possible, it is desirable to bring several temporary professed Brothers together for that formation programme.

THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

80. By his perpetual profession, the temporarily professed Brother integrates the Congregation permanently and thus participates fully in its mission in the People of God.

81. Given the importance of this profession, in addition to the ordinary preparation which the formation process involves, the profession is preceded by an immediate preparation: “The Provincial Superior makes

sure that a Brother's immediate preparation to the perpetual profession is serious and sufficiently long. The spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius, an extended retreat, a special year of preparation are examples of possible approaches.⁵⁴

a) The objectives

82. During this period of immediate preparation, the objective is for the Brother to:

- unify his life through gaining an awareness of, and giving witness to, his profound identification with the charism ;
- be assisted and accompanied in taking a decision which will give meaning to his existence;
- deepen his personal relationship with Jesus ; to that end, he is given the opportunity to benefit from extended periods of solitude, prayer and discernment.

b) The Organisation

83. Taking into consideration the diversity of cultures and the number of young Brothers, the General Council, in consultation with the major Superior concerned, shall propose different possibilities:

- the four-week Ignatian retreat in a place and with an accompaniment adapted to the circumstances, and an after-retreat follow-up
- the Exercises of Saint Ignatius in everyday life which implies a full year of intense follow-up, even if the Brother is involved in a normal educational form of commitment ;
- when there are several candidates, a programme covering the full year which precedes the perpetual profession ; in this programme, doctrinal studies are supplemented by joint periodic sharing and prayer meetings, with special emphasis on quarterly meetings and a four-week retreat organised during the summer holidays.
- various initiatives : international formation sessions, accompanying booklets, etc.

⁵⁴ D 148

6

ONGOING FORMATION

ONGOING FORMATION

- 84.** Ongoing formation is a global process of renewal which encompasses all aspects of the life of the Brother and of the Congregation.
- 85.** This process stands both in a historical and a personal context : that of a reality which changes rapidly, a fact which necessitates continual renewal.⁵⁵ On the other hand, if consecrated life is one of "progressive assimilation of the feelings of the Christ",⁵⁶ it seems evident that it will be a life-long process.
- 86.** This process:
- is ongoing, lasting throughout life. Continuing education is not limited in time. It represents "a theological way of thinking about religious life which, in itself, is a never-ending formation process, a participation in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the heart"⁵⁷ ;
 - is integral, that is, concerns the whole person and all the dimensions of the personality : physical, psychological, intellectual, spiritual and apostolico-ministerial* ;
 - has a ripple effect, giving rise to the renewal of communities, of the mission as well as to the renewal of community and apostolic structures.

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVES

a) The Human Dimension

87. Continue the sustained integration* of all the resources of one's thought, affectivity and experience as part of the harmonious growth of the whole person.

⁵⁵ D 68

⁵⁶ SAC 15

⁵⁷ VC 66

b) The Christian Dimension

Acknowledge the gift of the vocation through the sustained will to grow and to be faithful. The vocation is a gift that demands dynamic growth and fidelity. The Brother must show fidelity to God's constant call.

c) The Mennaisian Dimension

Live in an attitude of constant renewal, conscious that fidelity to the dynamic gift of the charism requires from one and all, and from the Congregation, creative fidelity. Ongoing training is the expression of this attitude; it is aimed at persons and, through them, at communities and at the mission.

It is the renewal of the person of the Brother that will make possible a renewed style of community life and a constant revision of the apostolic endeavours.

LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY

a) First and foremost, the Brother Himself

88. Personal commitment is necessary, without which no conversion is possible⁵⁸. "Thus it will be important that consecrated persons be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, at every age and at all times, in every environment and human context, from every person and every culture, showing openness to be taught by any fragment of truth and of beauty found around them"⁵⁹.

b) The Community

89. The community, whether at local⁶⁰, provincial or Congregation level, as the habitual place for human and spiritual growth, is the main and

⁵⁸ GC 2000, p. 2

⁵⁹ SAC, 15

⁶⁰ GC 2000, p.3

preferred environment for ongoing formation to take place on a day-to-day basis.

The way of life and the mission of the community, its fidelity to the Mennaisian project, its attention to the ordinary means of sanctification are the usual and permanent growth stimuli; animation of the community, a prerogative of the local superior, is most important in this regard.

c) The Provincial Superior and his Council

90. The Provincial and his council see to the organisation and the implementation, within the framework of the Mennaisian apostolic project⁶¹, of an itinerary and of a programme of formation for Brothers and lay persons who share the Mennaisian educational charism.

d) The Superior General and his Council

91. The Superior General and his Council organise and implement – with provisions for orientations and resources – the broad lines of a process of formation for the Congregation as a whole. They promote and give support to the formation programmes of Provinces and Vice-Provinces.

THE MAIN AXES OF ONGOING FORMATION

a) The Anthropological Axis

92. Personal development, which has begun and has been deepened through the human objectives of the preceding stages, continues. It is still necessary to rely on :

- a spiritual guide who will help bring an independent perspective on personal growth and on one's answer to God ;
- tested methods which foster a rereading of everyday living ;
- effective implementation mechanisms ;

⁶¹ GC 2000, p. 4

b) The Biblical Axis

The deepening of this dimension makes for an understanding of history as a history of salvation and makes possible an ongoing synthesis between faith and culture. With young people, it allows the Brother “to give an account for the hope that is in [him]”⁶² in a serious and credible manner.

c) The Mennaisian Axis

The charism of the Founders appears as an experience of the Spirit transmitted to all Mennaisian disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. Ongoing formation in the fields of the charism, of the spirituality and of the mission makes it possible to live one’s vocation in a creative manner following the example of John Mary de la Mennais. His continuous concern with formation has allowed him to meet important challenges and to give bold responses in the form of original educational solutions, new forms of presence, openness to the missions...

d) The Professional Axis

The continuous development of professional competencies with a view to an ever better service is an integral part of the spirituality and of the mission. “To fall behind other colleges, not to keep abreast of progress in human sciences, would be to deceive the legitimate expectations of families.”⁶³

THE STAGES

a) The First Years of Adulthood

93. The first years of adulthood may entail the risk of routine and the subsequent temptation to give in to discouragement because of the apparent lack of results.⁶⁴

⁶² 1 Peter 3, 15

⁶³ S II 845

⁶⁴ VC 70

The Main Aspects of the Evolution

94. The first years of adulthood are characterised mainly by :

- the integration* of affective motivations through the serene acceptance of one's history and personal limits ; to love with a renewed heart requires taking the road of ascesis which both controls and reinforces affectivity in the form of devotion to youth and authentic friendships ;
- the transition from idealism to realism through the acceptance of conflicts inherent to a life of relationships and the exercise of the mission ;
- the exercise of an inner awareness over one's heart, vitalized by the daily quest for God's will ;
- the personal, profound and transforming experience of God in the context of everyday life, even if community life is deceptive and the mission offers only meagre results. The Brother must see connections between experience of God and Mennaisian mission, between professional formation and following one's vocation, between the demands of community life and relationships with those who share the mission ;
- growth in the Mennaisian educator's identity and the continual reorganisation of one's life around the central figure of Christ and love for the youth : these are ways of overcoming disintegration and dispersal ;
- gaining the ability to take on responsibilities, without embarking on a course leading to individualism and competition ;
- the ability to take on cultural and professional obligations in a responsible manner in order to meet the challenges of the educational mission of youth ;
- an awareness that the mystery of suffering is part and parcel of any growth process and that the yoke is light when it is carried with Jesus⁶⁵ ; thus, community problems, failures in educational experiences, even temptations are part of the maturation process thanks to the vital force of the Easter mystery.

⁶⁵ Cf. Mt 11, 30

b) Years of Maturity

95. This stage of maturity, while it brings personal growth, can also bring the danger of a certain individualism, accompanied either by a fear of not being in line with the times, or by forms of inflexibility, self-centredness or diminished enthusiasm.

In these circumstances, as in severe crises associated with events and stages of life⁶⁶, ongoing formation is aimed at helping not only to bring back a higher level of spiritual and apostolic life, but also at discovering the special characteristics of this stage of life. For at this time, after refining certain features of the personality, the gift of self is made to God more genuinely and with greater generosity; it extends to others with greater serenity and wisdom, as well as with greater simplicity and richness of grace. This is the gift and experience of spiritual fatherhood.⁶⁷

The Main Aspects of the Evolution

96. These years are characterised mainly by :

- the transition from possible forms of activism to a profound encounter with oneself while overcoming dispersal and superficiality ;
- an inclination to personal and community discernment in the light of the Word of God, availability for new orientations and courses of action, and the adoption of an attitude of flexibility ;
- a friendly perspective on new generations, the capacity to give way to others, by refusing to give way to bitterness and contempt ;
- chastity lived as the expression of a mature love which helps establish true relationships with Brothers, lay persons and young people ;
- the definite choice for a simple and humble lifestyle ;
- the conciliation of the need of autonomy with the quest for communion, in the face of the ever-present risk of individualism and isolation ;

⁶⁶ Cf. FR 70

⁶⁷ VC 70

- the support given to the projects proposed by the Institute and the day-to-day implementation of his vital encounter with the Founders, continually finding his identity in the charism of the Congregation and reinterpreting it in creative fidelity ;
- a renewed enthusiasm for the gift of communion in the Mennaisian family through openness to, and the promotion of, positive experiences with a view to mutual enrichment in the shared mission.

c) The Retirement Years

97. Advanced age brings with it new blessings, but it also poses new problems which can be prepared for by a discerning programme of spiritual support. The gradual withdrawal from activity, sometimes caused by sickness or forced immobility, can be a very formative experience. Often a time of suffering, advanced age nonetheless offers to elderly consecrated persons the chance to be transformed by the Paschal experience, by being configured to the Crucified Christ who fulfils the Father's will in all things and abandons himself into the Father's hands, even to the surrendering of his spirit to him. This configuration represents a new way of living one's consecration, which is not tied to effectiveness in carrying out administrative responsibilities or apostolic work.⁶⁸

The Main aspects of the Evolution

98. This period of the retirement years is characterised mainly by :

- the determined refocusing of one's life to find the indwelling God in the depths of one's being ;
- a realistic perception of the crises of this stage which can generate new growth : at a time when he must give up his professional career or abandon some aspects of his regular activity, the Brother opens up with confidence and availability to new possibilities, to new commitments in his community, to new forms of integration in the mission ;
- the acceptance of a new state of vulnerability and limitations seen in the perspective of the Paschal mystery ;

⁶⁸ VC 70

- the working out and the serene acceptance of inevitable losses: gradual giving up of responsibilities, of emotional ties, of one's place of insertion, etc. ;
- developing a sense of humour and a new taste for the small daily surprises, received as God's presents through one's Brothers ;
- a feeling of sympathy (a "partiality of the heart ") for young people, by passing on one's love for education through prayer, offering and even - when possible - by pastoral forms of presence ;
- the gift of self to the Lord of Life in trustful thanksgiving ;
- the witness of one's joy for the success of one's existence in the service of God for young people, lived through the richness of the human and evangelical meaningfulness of the vows.

The Retirement Years' Community

99.

- The community is grateful for the presence of elderly Brothers and turns to good account the gift which they represent ;
- The community helps them to discover their creative talents, not only for the blossoming of their potentialities but also for the service of the community ;
- The community gives human and spiritual support to elderly Brothers by creating the conditions to listen to them, value them, allow them to enrich others of their wisdom ;
- The community has recourse to the offering which these Brothers make of themselves as well as to their prayer, by entrusting to them the young people, the Church, and all those who are directly engaged in service of the education.

7

THE FORMATION OF FORMATORS

THE FORMATION OF FORMATORS

THE PROFILE OF THE BROTHER IN CHARGE OF FORMATION

a) At the Human Level

100.

- The chosen Brother must have demonstrated a sound psychological make-up and confirmed emotional maturity : has a well-balanced personality, realistic knowledge of self and of his own vulnerability, internal freedom, an awareness of his personal history, the capacity to grow in the face of adversity.
- He is a person gifted with empathy and "sympathy of the heart", capable of establishing deep relationships with young people and of accompanying them in their human and spiritual growth.

b) At the Christian Level

101.

- The Brother in charge of formation considers his appointment as a grace of the Lord who calls him to accomplish an essential service in the Congregation.
- He knows, from personal experience, what spiritual accompaniment entails.
- He has progressed in intimacy with the Lord; he watches over his spiritual life, practises a spirituality grounded in reality, has fathomed the Scriptures and practised *Lectio vitae*.
- He distinguishes himself, in his experience of religious life, by a strong community feeling.
- He is a Brother who can be said to have made Christ the centre of his life on the grounds of his criteria of discernment, of his way of looking at issues, of his genuine concern to live an experience of faith.
- He loves the Church and is well acquainted with her teachings, especially everything that concerns religious life and formation.

c) At the Mennaisian Level

102.

- The Brother who is called upon to be a formator joyfully identifies with the Mennaisian religious way of life and shows a real sense of belonging to the Congregation and to the Mennaisian charism.
- He is concerned with continually updating the theology of the vows, of fraternal life, of the mission, of religious life to be lived as shared mission, of the option for the poor, of the place of religious life in a Church communion.
- He is attached to the Mennaisian charism which he lives creatively ; he seeks inspiration in the life of the Founders, interfaces it with the current cultural and ecclesial parameters in the field of spirituality and of the mission as well as with the features that constitute the Mennaisian charism.
- He has been involved in a Mennaisian apostolic endeavour of the Province; he has had the opportunity to establish ties with children and young people experiencing difficulties.

COMPETENCIES EXPECTED OF THE FORMATOR

a) At the Human Level

103. The Brother who is called upon to be in charge of formation should have:

- notions of psychology as it impacts on spirituality ;
- foundations in anthropology and socio-psychology ;
- a sufficient knowledge of affectivity, of sexuality and of the internal psychological dynamisms which trigger conscious and unconscious actions in human beings, and the knowledge of the processes to educate and form them ;
- a thorough knowledge of the social and cultural environment ;
- a feeling for the culture or cultures of the candidates in formation ;
- a systematic and rigorous formation to spiritual accompaniment ;

- the knowledge and the application of relational and discernment techniques.

b) At the Christian Level

104 The Brother who is called upon to be in charge of formation should have :

- a deep and systematic knowledge of the spirituality and the stages inherent to progress in faith, as well as the necessary procedures to help purify and reconstruct the experience of God, leading to an encounter with Him ;
- the spirit of prayer ;
- an adequate formation, including :
 - a) basic formation in philosophy and theology,
 - b) biblical, theological and ecclesiological foundations,
 - c) Christian spirituality,
 - d) ethical and moral foundations,
 - e) theology of the religious life,
 - f) the Word of God as primary source of spirituality and of formation ;
- a personalised experience and updated knowledge of liturgy, especially where the Eucharist is concerned.

c) At the Mennaisian Level

105 The Brother who is called upon to be in charge of formation should have :

- knowledge of the lives of the Founders, of the writings of John Mary de la Mennais (Correspondence, Sermons) and of the history of the Congregation ;
- experience of what our spirituality, charism and mission, including the shared mission, entail in today's world ;
- practical knowledge of the stages of initial formation and of the spiritual development appropriate to each stage.

LEADERSHIP IN FORMATION

a) The Formator

106. The formator himself:

- is the main agent of his formation, and this conviction informs the whole of his existence and choices: times of prayer, of reflection and of silence, readings, meetings with the other formators, participation in sessions, etc. ;
- participates in formation sessions in the Province and in the diocese ; is a member of the team of formation in the Congregation.

b) The Provincial Superior and his Council

107. The Provincial and his council:

- make it a priority objective to foresee and prepare the Brothers who will be in charge of formation ;
- encourage and facilitate the formators' participation in ongoing formation programmes : conferences for religious, centres of formation for formators, courses, sessions, etc.
- see to the organisation of meetings and to collaboration among various formators ;
- make available the general means by which formators can deepen and upgrade the contents of the 'ratio' ;
- set up a formation commission in the Province ;
- when necessary, collaborate with other provinces on formation issues common to all.

c) The Superior General and his Council

108. The Superior General and his Council :

- show much care when designating the persons in charge of the novitiate and of the scholasticate ;

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- show concern over the implementation of the Congregation's 'ratio institutionis', make its *raison d'être* and criteria known, motivate and assess its application ;
- give their support to provinces in their choice and their preparation of Brothers in charge of formation ;
- organise meetings to coordinate and support the ongoing formation of different formators ;
- designate a Brother who is responsible for formation in the Congregation.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ FR 71

GLOSSARY

Connaturality

A relationship or form of intimacy which is not perceptible by the senses, but which lives and nourishes itself on a sort of sense of God. It makes possible, through grace, the attainment of a certain level of knowledge which falls within the province of the wisdom of the heart rather than that of knowledge. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, wisdom makes for "the rightful evaluation of things divine (...). This sympathy or connaturality with the divine is given to us by the love which unites us to God."⁷⁰

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to share another person's feelings and emotions as if they were one's own. (Collins Cobuild English Dictionary, 2000)

Frame of reference

The whole theological reflection and doctrinal values belonging to the vision of the Church and of society, enlightened by the magisterium of the Church and the patrimony of the Founders.

Inconsistencies *(Term borrowed from the Rulla Jesuit school)*

In the field of self-knowledge, a person's weak points expressed through a lack of freedom and which turn one away from God's project.

The central inconsistency deserves special attention: it concerns the person's inconsistency which makes that person the most vulnerable and which is very difficult to control.

⁷⁰ Summa Theologica 2-2, 45-2

Any inconsistency, specially the central inconsistency, has its own root causes, generates special psychological motive forces, and entails consequences in relationships with God, with others and with self, in community life and in apostolic life.

Integration

Process by which the Brother achieves the synthesis (inner unity) of his person, a synthesis which coordinates and develops in him his identity as a man, as a believer and as a religious.

Lectio divina

Special approach proposed for the reading of the Word of God.

a) Preamble

- submit oneself to a deep faith experience of the presence of God who lives in the text of the Word. Like Moses in front of the burning bush, begin by removing one's shoes to experience the actual and active presence of the Lord in his Word ;
- pray the epiclesis : invoke the Spirit so that, by his power, the Word is made flesh in us.

b) Methodology

Lectio

What does the text say ?

- read the text quietly, peacefully.

Meditatio

What does the text tell me, us ?

- use reason to discover the “hidden truth”;
- ruminate the text to savour its meaning ;
- contemplate the text in the Ignatian sense.

Oratio

What does the text invite me to say to God ?

- this phase forms one body with the preceding one ;
- spontaneous words of praise, of thanksgiving, of revolt, invocations, etc.

Contemplatio

- allow the slow penetration of, and familiarisation with, the Word which “opens the heart to faith that makes us see the world, people and events as Christ sees them”.⁷¹

Lectio vitae

Special approach proposed for the revision of life.

Methodology

Entering into prayer

- become aware that God is there, and descend into his presence ;
- seek the assistance of the Spirit ;

Thanksgiving

- go back over the Lord’s presence throughout the day ;

Ask for forgiveness

- under Jesus’ loving eye, look at one’s day, its shortcomings, indiscretions, failings to listen to him ; allow him to tell us : “Go, your faith has saved you.”

Offering of one’s life

- with God, decide on tomorrow’s plan of action, allow oneself to be taught by him.

Mechanisms / Motivations

Everything which imparts a vitalising energy to the process of formation.

Mental prayer

The Christian Tradition⁷² has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. “This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.” (CCC, n° 2699)

⁷¹ D 8

⁷² Cf. CCC 2697 and following.

Vocal prayer, which associates the body to interior prayer, finds expression primarily in the *Our Father*. The psalms, prayers of intercession and of praise shared in the community, etc. also give expression to vocal prayer.

Meditation is an internal action which helps us to make our own what we read, primarily the Word of God, by confronting it with the reality of our life and with ourselves. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. By strengthening the will to follow Christ, it prepares us for contemplation. Such is the approach proposed by *Lectio divina*.

Contemplation, under the action of the Spirit, leads to openness of the heart, “to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him” (CCC n° 2708). “Contemplative prayer seeks him ‘whom my soul loves’.” (Ct 1, 7) It is Jesus, and in him, the Father.” (CCC n° 2709). “Let us contemplate He who watches over us, let us keep Him company, let us speak with Him, imposing silence to reasoning”, said St. Teresa of Jesus.

Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. This gaze purifies our heart and the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart. It informs the whole of life and becomes a continuous prayer. It is only at the end of a life-long spiritual struggle that the heart is transformed. It is a free gift to which the Brother responds in the silence of his heart and obedience of faith, through the humble and faithful means of the morning prayer as stipulated by the Rule and which John Mary de la Mennais recommended so highly to his Brothers: “Of all your exercises, it is the most necessary ... ” (Rule of 1825)

A Brother used to say of our Founder : “He was very faithful to mental prayer... I believe his thoughts very often turned to God and he strongly urged us to recall the presence of God. This I know for having been under his guidance during a four-year period.” (The Spirituality of a Man of Action, p. 209).

Ministry / Ministerial

Education is a profession and a task; but for a Christian educator, and more so for a Brother, his apostolate constitutes a real ministry. The school is a theological place where God reveals himself and calls.

The educator lives the ministry when he really understands all the facets of his function as a mission before God and before the Church.

Thus, the Brother fulfils his educational service as a day-to-day liturgy : “Your school is a temple.” He then shares in the ministry of the Word: “(They) are the ministers of God.”⁷³

Moral certitude

Certainty based on strong probability and not on undeniable reasons. It is opposed to material certainty: "We have no material proof, but we have moral certainty."

Needs

Tendencies associated with actions, a person's natural potentialities which seek actualisation and which encompass the whole of psychosocial life and the various aspects which are related to it. Nobody can deny or put aside one's needs in one's progress towards maturity.

Among the needs, the central needs are specific energies bound to the instincts. These needs are generally unconscious. They occupy a central place in the psychology of the person and they condition positively or negatively that person's behaviour, motivations and life's options.

The well-balanced human person is one who is guided by one's values but who also knows how to channel the immense energy derived from one's needs.

Personalisation (*Term borrowed from the Franciscan school of J. Garrido*)

A process which entails essentially a questing attitude. Personalisation is an experience which organises itself around the person involved, gradually making him the main actor of his own history. He trains himself to become more and more aware that the person is one and to develop all his existence around this uniqueness.

⁷³ To the Providence of St-Brieuc, S II 820bis

The main keys to personalisation are : the process that leads to it, experience of the human condition, a holistic vision of the person, discernment, authenticity.

Psychology of one who is sent / of the apostle

Any given psychology (definite or particular), psychology of leaders, of relationships, of the image... can be learned and deepened. Similarly, the psychology of one who is sent can also be learned, developed and deepened.

In St. John's Gospel, chapter 5, we are shown what that psychology is and how it develops :

The necessary attitudes to live by it are openness and receptivity. The psychology of the one who is sent is before all else a fruit of the Spirit, and it is the same Spirit who makes it grow in us, in our own spirit.

The fundamental attitudes of the one who is sent are :

- The contemplation of the Father in action : Jn 5, 17 “My Father is working until now.”
- The realisation of what the Father does: Jn 5, 19 “The Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing.”
- Listening to what the Father says : I speak what I hear from the Father.
- Judging of things as the Father does : Jn 5,30.
- Not seeking one's own glory, but the glory that comes from God : Jn 5,41.

Spirituality of bonds / relationships

Spirituality according to which it is first and foremost a style of relationships which defines the Brother.

According to Vita Consecrata, the Church is essentially mystery of communion, and religious life is confession of the Trinity, the source of all communion. It is communion with the Trinity which transforms human

relationships. The Mennaisian spirituality is a Trinitarian spirituality, one of communion, which can express itself only in relationships and bonds. The Brother also can then be considered as a son sent by the Father to youth and children, called to be configured to Christ by the power of the Spirit. He is invited to translate the Trinitarian communion in his relationships with youth and children.

Wisdom-inspired learning

An approach to the Word of God which goes beyond the plain meaning of a text but which seeks before all else an encounter :

This mode of learning consists in attentive listening, in being calmly attuned to the Spirit :

- looking for the deepest meaning of the text ;
- savouring the hidden manna⁷⁴ deep inside the Word ;
- feeling invited to discern the presence and the will of God in everything, guided by Wisdom which is at work in the inner person and “which teaches him what is pleasing to God”⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Ap 2, 17

⁷⁵ Wis 9, 10

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