

CONGREGATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

BY THE WAYS OF THE HEART

THE FORMATION OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

RATIO FORMATIONIS

Rome 2006

INITIALS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- Bdg m** = DAUGHTERS OF ST. MARY OF PROVIDENCE – SERVANTS OF CHARITY - GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS, *Basic document for the Guanellian Mission*, Rome 1994.
- c** = canon *The code of canon law*, 1983.
- C** = *Constitutions of the Servants of Charity*, Rome 1986.
- DMP** = CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Directory for the ministry and life of the priests*, 1994.
- DV** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, 1965.
- FIG** = CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Fraternal life in community*, 1994.
- GS** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965.
- ICD** = CONGREGATION FOR THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Instruction concerning the Criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*, 2005.
- LG** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 1964.
- NMI** = JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, 2001.
- PC** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Perfecte Caritatis*, 1965.
- PCS** = CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Consecrated persons and their mission in the schools. Reflections and Guidelines*, 2002.
- PdV** = JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1992.
- PI** = CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Potissimum Institutioni*, Rome 1990.
- PO** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree *Presbiterorum Ordinis*, 1965.
- R** = *Regulations of the Servants of Charity*, Rome 1986.
- RC** = CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Renovationis Causam. Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Life*, 1965.
- SC** = VATICAN COUNCIL II, Constitution *Sacrosantum Concilium*, 1963.
- SaC** = PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 1967.
- SafC** = CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Start afresh from Christ*, 2002.
- VC** = JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Consecrated life*, 1996.
- VS** = JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, 1993.

INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the Founder

1. When father Louis Guanella was seventy years old, at the insistence of his first disciples, he wrote a memory of what the divine providence had fulfilled in his personal, Christian, priestly and religious life.

For him narrating becomes a highly spiritual work, to the extent that, from the autobiographical memories emerges progressively the sense of a direction already imprinted and to be imprinted, a history already begun and to be continued.

Father Louis perceived in it, the *ways of (divine) providence*¹, in joy and sufferings, in the light and darkness. In each of his memories there is a trace of the mystery of God in the events of his life and his works of charity (Cf... Eph. 3:3; Pdv 46) and we can decipher in it always the mystery of sanctity, a work totally of God and totally of man.

A history to be continued

2. The Founder stops his autobiographical narration suddenly. It is not known whether he wanted to leave it so, like a suspended discourse, or like a way which he or however some one for him had to take up with all spontaneity in the future. But we know that many others wanted to follow his footsteps consecrating their life to God as instruments of providence by going through the world announcing and witnessing the Gospel of Charity. They are the Servants of Charity who for the love of Jesus, followed him, in simplicity and happiness of heart and spent their life in the service of the poor. So, the evangelical ideal of charity lived in holiness by father Guanella was handed over to history and to us.

Following Lord Jesus

3. In our journey with the Church and in communion with the saints (Cf. C 6-8), together with the Founder, we are sent to the poor (Cf. C 3). Tending towards the attainment of “*perfect humanity according to the measure to the full maturity in Christ*” (Eph. 4:13), we cultivate the joy of being loved by God, good and merciful Father and to be able to love according to the example of the Son, Jesus Christ who made himself servant out of love.

Therefore, everyday we make ourselves available to the plan of God and renew our “yes” with the desire to follow Jesus Christ in the service to the brethren most in need.

¹ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *The ways of (Divine) Providence*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 4, USA, 1993).

Gift and mystery

4. Our consecrated life, like that of the Founder, is a “gift and mystery”. At the origin of our vocational history, a mystery of divine choice (Cf. Jn. 15:6; Jer. 1:5) was at work and it is a gift, which surpasses enormously man (Cf. 2 Tim. 1:9).

It is a history that tends to form in us “the new man” and which therefore tends to sanctity in the conformation to Christ. It is a history made up of progressive stages and specific objectives that are interrelated according to the stages of personal existence.

Sense of the initial and ongoing formation

5. The formation is related to the past, the present and the future both of the individual person and the communities and involves deeply the Institution. It is *initial* formation for those who are inclined to become Servants of Charity and it is *ongoing* for those who continue to be so in a progressive dynamism of faithfulness. (Cf. VC 69-70).

6. Given the fact that the whole of consecrated life in it self a continuous becoming (Cf. C 84), the *ongoing formation is the scope of all the formation*².

Ministry which mediates the Mystery

7. The formation is above all a **ministry**, a fraternal service offered already from the beginning, to the one who finds on him a plan that comes from above. But all the more it is a *Mystery*: a work carried on by the Father with the power of the Spirit to form the image of his Son in those who are called by him.

Educational and formative activity

8. *The educational activity* aims at bringing out the truth about each one of us while the *formative activity* aims to make us resemble the image of Jesus all the more (Cf. C 83), so that following the example of the Founder - we make ourselves open to the richness of the heart of Christ and obtain from it a new sensibility in helping the poor (Cf. C 2).

Jesus, the Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan, is the ideal for us and the form of our consecration. The achievement of this ideal demands an itinerary of human, Christian and Charismatic growth tending to the development of our Guanellian vocation.

Making progress in conformity to Christ through the faithful practice of the vows (Cf. C 96), it enables us to praise God and serve him in his poor (Cf. C 29.63.69), in the sufferings and the self-giving of apostolic life.

Labor of love

9. With the conviction that God the Father, *in every time and event educates us with strength and tenderness* (Bdgm 7), we are conscious that our growth *always happens*

² The ongoing formation is not that which comes after the initial formation, but it is the principle which inspires and precedes it as the original prospective and as the final objective.

through the personal assimilation of knowledge and values (Bdgm 18). Such assimilation is not an exterior fact, but *is especially a labor of love* (Bdgm 18), as confirmed by our experience and the human sciences.

For a formative project

10. Through a slow gestation, a divine project is realized on us and in our Institute, in a continuous evolutive process, making the Guanellian religious consecration a formation at every stage.

Such a consciousness moves us to transform our precious charismatic deposit into a general plan of formation, which as an educational method, *by the ways of the heart* (Bdgm 31) leads to the total consecration to God for the whole of the existence.

Primary duty of the Institute

11. Our Institute *places among its primary duties the task of assuring its members a solid formation. In fact the harmonious development of the person, the apostolic vigor and the unity of the Institute depend largely on this element. The Institute welcomes its new children as a gift from God and after the example of Jesus, who prepared the disciples for their mission, educates them in mind and heart* (C 82).

The formation to consecrated life is both a work of God who creates and forms and work of man, who with freedom and love collaborates to be modeled. Therefore, it is a complex action because it involves God, the Institute and all those who are called to belong to it. From here, the exigency to define an educational-charismatic and systematic-normative text, that is the *Ratio Formationis* (Cf. VC 68).

Recipients of *Ratio*

12. The formative project, in a clear and dynamic form, is directed in the first place *to all the confreres*, the members who constitute the Congregation, both as *individual persons* and as *communities*. In a special way, it is directed to the Superiors *of the Institute*, according to the responsibilities they have in our religious family.

With particular attention, the text is entrusted to the *formators* and the candidates *to the Guanellian consecrated life*.

Structure of the text

13. The complexity of the educational formative activity implies the contribution of various components, which characterize our *Ratio*:

- *Reference Models*,
- a network of *educational interventions*,
- the *converging plurality of Dimensions and levels*,
- the *basic educational Dynamisms*,
- the *formative stages*.

The possibility and the quality of an integral formation are related to the presence of the first four elements and the harmony with which they form every formative stage.

A. Reference Models

14. The *Reference Models* is not only of idealistic and theoretical nature, but it is also practical, theological and anthropological. The goals of formation process, so also the general objectives, the methodology, the activity guidelines, the means, the educational style (Bdgm 99-239) and the stages are defined in it.

B. Educational interventions

15. The *educational interventions* comprise above all the work of the grace of the Lord and then, the action of the Church, the formative community, the local educative community, the formator, the candidate and his cultural and apostolic context.

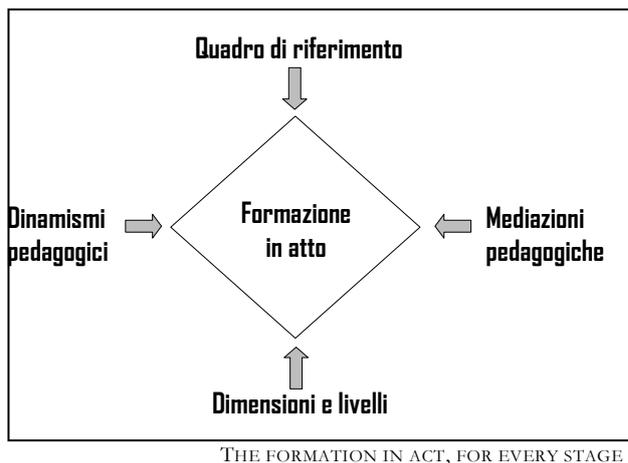
C. Dimensions and Levels

16. Our formative project is articulated in a *converging plurality of Dimensions and Levels*, in the sense of attention to areas and elements, for example, the Christian and charismatic dimension, the human, cultural, affective-sexual dimension, the passage from the knowledge level to experiential level, the personal, communitarian and social, emotive, intellectual and volitive level.

Especially, we refer to the human-affective, spiritual and charismatic dimension.

D. Educational Dynamisms

17. The dynamism of formation evolves around three types of interventions, expressed by the verbs with which the educational phenomenon is indicated: *educate*, *form* and *accompany*³.



³ Here after, by utilizing the terms *formation, education, educative and formative action, process/ formative task* and synonyms, we intend to refer to the unique action in which the educational, formative and accompanying aspects are integrated.

1. REFERENCE MODELS

Convergence of elements inscribed in our heritage

18. The theology of vocation, Guanellian anthropology and our history constitute the *Reference Models* of the educational action. It configures the whole of the principles and fundamentals inscribed in the charismatic patrimony of the Congregation. Moreover, it confers the Guanellian character to the entire formative process: goals, objectives, methodology, educational style, operational guidelines, formative means and stages.

1.1 THEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

In the normative texts of the Congregation

19. The theological principles are contained prevalently in our *Constitutions*; and the anthropological principles in the *Basic Document for the Guanellian Mission*.

The human person

20. Our texts, in the light of Christian revelation, underline the dignity of the human person, made in the image and likeness of God. It is affirmed that every person – unique and unrepeatable – is loved by God and is capable of love, for which, gifted with intelligence and will, defines himself essentially by the relationship with God and others. It is also confirmed that in Jesus Christ, every individual, through Baptism, receives the grace to become the Son of God and be able to call him in the Spirit: *Abba Father!* (Cf. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6; Jn. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).

Family of brothers on journey to the Father

21. In the anthropological vision of the Founder, man is called to form a family of brothers around Christ united in the bond of charity and journey to the Father. Father Louis felt as his vocation and mission the commitment to privilege, above all, the poorest and proclaim in the world the primacy of Charity.

In the logic of self-giving, imitating Jesus

22. Participating in his charism, we feel called to transcend ourselves in the logic of self-giving. Imitating Jesus, everyone tends to overcome the limitations of *self* in the commandment of love (Cf. Jn. 15:12).

In communion with the poor

23. We discover on the poorest brothers some values and moral and spiritual resources of great efficacy for a world, according to the plan of God (Cf. Bdgm 5); *in their condition they more closely resemble Jesus Christ, humiliated and suffering [...] and they are the most eloquent sign* (Bdgm 6; Cf. C 64).

With a specific vocation

24. The Servant of Charity lives the gift of oneself in the form of consecrated life: he follows Jesus as the only necessary good and leaves everything to stay with him; he places the charity at the center of his existence, ready to be sent to build the Kingdom of God in the world (Cf. C 38).

In the fullness of humanity

25. The beginning point of our consecrated life is a fundamental option which is expressed in *entrusting ourselves to Christ* and in believing in the Gospel. We look at the humanity of the Son of God, *imitating closely his way of life* (VC 14), to assimilate the attitude of Christ towards the Father (Cf. VC 65.66).

He who, “*worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted with a human will and loved with a human heart*” (GS 22), directs our will towards what is good, our mind towards what is true and our hearts towards what is beautiful and holy. The *sequela Christi* becomes therefore a motive of joy and of full realization of humanity.

Values which give form to the Consecration

26. In the light of Christian revelation and the constitutional affirmations, the evangelical values which give Guanellian form to our Consecration could be outlined thus:

- animated by the *spirit of charity*,
- we journey to the *Father*,
- following *Christ*,
- in communion of *brothers*
- and with the *poor*,
- participating in the life and mission of the *Church*,
- accompanied by *Virgin Mary*,
- for the ways of the *world*.

We live such values as *clerics or Brothers*, in the form of *chaste, poor and obedient life*, which Christ chose for himself and proposed to the disciples.

To the tasks of their religious vocation, priests and deacons *unite also those tasks that flow specifically from the Holy Orders* (C 76). The Brothers, as lay religious, *offer to the mission their ability, experience and professionalism, enlivening all these with evangelical witness* (C 76).

Dynamisms of growth

27. If on the one hand, we realize to be directed towards values, on the other hand, we understand the necessity of collecting the angles typically human of our vocational answer that makes appeal to freedom of heart, to mastering oneself and responsibility.

In order to make always more authentic the answer of love toward God and poor, there are some human mechanisms and dynamisms, which supported by faith, should evolve harmoniously. For this, we assume *Reference Models* which take into account the person, capable of transcending himself, as much as be blocked by his limitations.

In tension

28. Each one of us, like every person, undergoes the tension between what is and what he is called to be, between good and evil (Cf. Rom. 7:15), between the values that one wants to embrace and the needs that he could subdue, between the “Old” man and the “New” man (Cf. Eph. 4:17-24), between the fruits of the Spirit and works of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-22).

Man in fact, *“carries in himself the seed of eternal life and the vocation to make his own the transcendent values. But he remains exposed interiorly to the risk of failing in his vocation. This is due to resistances that he meets in his existential journey both at the conscious level, where the moral responsibility is summoned and at subconscious level”*⁴.

Liberty to form

29. The tension between the ideals and the real situation of the person, being ontological, is not bound to this or that culture, or age or periods. Therefore, there is a need *to form the freedom*, so that the person becomes always more capable to choose and live authentically the values. On pain of the non-realization of the person himself...

Between nature and grace

30. The free gift of God’s love and the freedom of man need to shine together. *Grace and freedom are not opposed. On the contrary, grace enlivens and sustains human freedom, setting it free from the slavery of sin (cf. Jn. 8:34-36), healing it and elevating it in its ability to be open to receiving God's gift. And if we cannot in any way minimize the absolutely gratuitous initiative of God who calls, neither can we in any way minimize the serious responsibility which persons face in the challenge of their freedom* (PdV 36).

A necessary equilibrium

31. The experience of limitations related to the human nature demands an assiduous work oneself in order to transform one’s own weaknesses into positive potentialities. At the same time, the grace of Christ, elevating the resources which the person has in himself, contributes to activate the necessary equilibrium required by one’s own vocation.

The extreme seriousness of this challenge leads to exclude those of insufficient psycho-physical and moral balance from consecrated and priestly life and not to pretend that grace could make up for it (SaC 64).

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE FORMATIVE PROCESS

Conformation to Christ

32. The goal of consecrated life *is conformity to Lord Jesus in his total self-giving; this must also be the principal objective of formation* (VC 65). The whole of formative process, therefore, aims to model our lives on Him, assuming the Gospel as the supreme

⁴ *Address of JOHN PAUL II to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, 25 January 1988.*

rule of our life, in the light of the spirit of the Institute and in observance of the Rule (Cf. C 83).

Sentiments of filial and compassionate charity

33. Formation *is a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ* (VC 65). Following the example of father Louis Guanella, we strive to live them *in filial surrender to God and in evangelical compassion to the poor* (C 9). In particular, we make it our own the characteristics of *benevolence, compassion and solicitude* (Cf. Bdgm 32-34) which were of Jesus, Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan.

Fullness of humanity and holiness

34. Christ the Lord is the model of the *fullness of humanity* to be followed: his way of loving, thinking and serving, gives fulfillment to our *universal call to holiness* (LG 40).

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF FORMATION

Objectives and contents

35. To interiorize the attitudes of Christ and manifest prominently the *compassionate charity* (C 76), we follow intermediate *objectives* related to being human, believer and consecrated.

Such objectives demand a deep study about the specific *elements*, which favor the growth of the vocation in the various stages of formation.

Human dimension

36. With regard to human dimension, both at personal level and in the relationship with God and with others, the formation intends to help:

- the *knowledge* and the *acceptance of oneself*,
- the *education of freedom*,
- the acquisition of virtues, always more consistent,
- the growth of a *sufficient maturity of heart, mind and will*.

Spiritual dimension

37. As for the spiritual dimension, the formation aims:

- to develop the *consciousness* of the love of the Father and the *ability to reciprocate it*;
- to rekindle *the option of conformation* to Christ Jesus;
- to favor a sufficient process of *conversion*;
- to bring to perfection the *love* and the *fidelity to the Church*;
- to make grow in the *moral and theological virtues*.

Charismatic dimension

38. In merit of the charismatic dimension, the formation tries to:

- develop the *identity* of the consecrated Servant of Charity,
- and edify the *sense of belonging* to the Guanellian family.

To this purpose, we dedicate ourselves to

- favor the mystical experience in the *docility to the Spirit*,
- consolidate the *ascetic itinerary*,
- qualify the *apostolic ministry in the mission*.

1.4 REFERENCE MODELS

Our way

39. Our pedagogy finds specific inspiration in some *reference models*, to be known and to be loved and which indicate to us the *way* to take upon towards the formative goals (Cf. Bdgm 7-13).

God the Father

40. The formative action refers above all to God the Father, *provident and merciful*, who with patience gathers us with bonds of love around his Son Jesus as a family of brothers. *This delightful divine psychology not only inspires all our educational activity, but constitutes its foundation and origin, i.e. God reveals Himself as a Father who loves and encourages us to make this love the purpose of our* (Bdgm 7).

Jesus Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan

41. It considers then Jesus Christ as *Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan*, who, revealing fully the merciful love of the Father, goes in search of the brothers, saves them with the gift of his life and leads them to the Father.

Vivifying Spirit

42. It recognizes, more over, the Holy Spirit as *vivifying principle* who guides all persons to full maturity, making them in turn witnesses and animators of the evangelical values.

With his *sanctifying presence*, He moulds the hearts of the person to a *communion* always more intense, towards the Father and towards the brothers.

The Trinity

43. The Trinity is our *supreme model of communion*. We search in it *the source of that love constituting the soul of our educational mission and find the origin and model of that communion which we seek to imitate in our centers*" (Bdgm 10).

Virgin Mary

44. Following the experience of the Founder and the teaching of the Church, we inspire to Virgin Mary, *obedient servant* of the Father and our *mother*. The Institute finds *in her kindness and solicitude in charity, a model for our lives and our industrious service to the poor* (C 35).

The family of Nazareth

45. Another model to which the Guanellian pedagogy inspires is that of *Christian family*. Considering the family, *we intend to refer to those universally recognized values*

belonging to the Plan willed by the Creator, which the Holy Family of Nazareth lived in an exemplary way (Bdgm 12).

The Founder

46. The aforementioned models of inspiration have been embodied in the Founder. He presents himself to us as a *filially abandoned to the divine plans* and as the *evangelizer of the poor*. His example moves us to the love of the Father and the faithful fulfillment of our mission.

The Saints of charity

47. We take also as models the Saints of charity, in particular the *patron saints of our Congregation*: St. Joseph, St. John Bosco, St. Joseph Benedict Cottelengo, St. Pius X, St. Vincent De Paul, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Camillus De Lellis, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, St. Jerome Emiliani, St. Cajetan of Thiene and St. Anthony of Padua (Cf. R 32- 33). With joy, we follow the footsteps of the *saints of our religious family*, like Blessed Clare Bosatta and the Servant of God Mons. Aurelio Bacciarini.

1.5 METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

A path, a method

48. The formative process is *a path* on which we proceed together toward maturity: *each one nourishes his own identity, maintaining his own role and function, while all help and support one another* (Bdgm 17). It is also *a method*, which in the vocational growth leads to assume the attitudes of Christ (Cf. VC 65.68).

A project

49. The pedagogical itinerary is thought as a *global project, organic and coherent*, which considers together the subjects to be formed, the community, the formators and the formative proposal, *adapted* to the age, the situations and the levels of maturity reached.

Since the formative process does not always happen in a harmonious and integral way, the project more than limiting itself prevalently to verbal communications (conferences, courses, studies), it has to favor formative experiences, which touch the life for a *personal assimilation of knowledge and values* (Bdgm 18).

An evolutive model

50. From this point of view we place as the basis of the formative task an evolutive model, respecting the person in his complexity.

In concrete, in view of an identity sufficiently mature, also at vocational level, we are attentive to:

- to the *real situation of the person*;
- to the *dynamisms of integral growth* which, in the way and with different rhythm, tends toward always more great equilibrium;
- to the *process of progressive and constant change*, for the whole of life;
- to the *historical and cultural reality* where one lives.

Charity of heart

51. Our formative method *rests entirely on charity considered by Father Guanella as 'the infallible rule of religious education' that is, an education inspired by God's own style* (Bdgm 22)⁵. Charity believes in the strength of life, find goodness even where it is hidden, trusts the ways of Providence, believes that everyone can be taught and follows the ways of the heart (Cf. Bdgm 31).

1.6 GENERAL OPERATIVE CRITERIA

Operative Criteria

52. Our formative itinerary makes use of precise *operative Criteria*, which could be listed thus:

- Bread and the Lord,
- Primacy of the Heart,
- healthy realism,
- Value of daily life,
- graduality and continuity,
- attention to the socio-cultural context,
- preferential attention to the weakest,
- active participation in the formative mission.

Bread and the Lord

53. With the expression *Bread and the Lord*, the Founder entrusted to us the commitment to the promotion of persons, both at the natural and spiritual level. The twin-words *Bread and the Lord* express *the Criteria of wholeness*. For the charismatic inspiration, we are called to love the Lord with all one's heart, with all one's strength and mind and the neighbor as oneself. Thus, going again on the path that goes from Jerusalem to Jericho (Cf. Lk. 10:27-37), it will be our duty to procure together *Bread and the Lord* to be shared with the brothers and favor a harmonious human-Christian-charismatic growth of the subject (Cf. Bdgm 14.42).

Primacy of heart

54. Our pedagogical relationship is born from the heart and is carried out above all *by the ways of the heart* (Cf. Bdgm 31). As the Founder said⁶, *it is especially, a labor of love [...] because it occurs deep in the heart, source of feelings, thoughts, intentions, creative planning and decisions* (Bdgm 18). More than the techniques, what is important to us is the

⁵ Charity is the soul and energy, which makes the system productive. It is the source and essential element of our educational method. It stirs and informs interior dispositions and the behavior of interpersonal relations. It sets the atmosphere and determines the general work (Bdgm 22). The formative action, thus, is a relationship in which one offers another constant and cordial accompaniment in the learning of values as well as assistance for needs.

⁶ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *1899 Regulations for SSH*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1993, 218).

openness of mind and heart, which comes from a benevolence illumined by the faith.

In our activity, therefore, let us integrate harmoniously the technique and love, so that love may be the soul, giving life to the techniques and the techniques may be true instruments at the service of the creative strength of love (Cf. Bdgm 43).

Healthy realism

55. In the elaboration and implementation of the educational formative plan, we strive to seek and to value the real problems of the person with *healthy realism* (Bdgm 44), aiming with every care at the *personalization* of the formative itinerary. Even though we refer to educative goals in their idealness, we would like to avoid the danger of outlining a figure of servant of charity practically inaccessible, to the extent of discouraging those who are inclined to it.

Value of daily life

56. It is important also the *value of daily life* with its happenings and with its rhythms. *For this reason, we seek to transform into occasion for growth both the rapport with others as well as events, things and every experience, even those marked by suffering or error* (Bdgm 45).

This Criterion reveals the prospective of the *integration of one's own living*: the integrated person does not abolish the difficulties, but endeavors to revolve everything around Christ the Lord: sentiments, desires, crisis, projects and passion... The charity of Christ, which attracts us and reveals us the plan of the Father, becomes the catalytic principle of whole life.

Graduality and continuity

57. The appreciation of daily life and the integration of one's own living happen with *graduality and continuity*. Therefore, the formation places us in a journey of progressive configuration to Christ. There are stages to be completed in each season of existence that take into consideration the age, prior experience and the levels of maturity.

Attention to the socio-cultural context

58. While we implement the opportune interventions for the promotion of persons, we are concerned to know and to understand the *socio-cultural context*, to favor the interiorization of the values of the Guanellian consecration and prepares to the *valorization of the diversity* (Cf. Bdgm 51-52).

Our formative activity tends to unite the universality of the charism with the distinctiveness of the culture, favoring a right process of *inculturation*⁷.

⁷ *We try to ponder the Guanellian charism in the light of the local history and culture. This reflection is necessary in order to actualize the charism in a specific, practical and educational experience; one in which the rich values of our charism and those of the local culture harmoniously merge together* (Bdgm 50).

Preferential attention towards the weakest

59. We show *preferential attention towards the weakest. The more miserable one is, lacking means or human protection, so much more must we show preference and give assistance* (Bdgm 46; Cf. VC 82).

For Father Louis the formation implies always an experiential aspect of the mission. Thus, at the end of the first formation there is no “entering” in the mission as if an all-new field, for, we have already met the poor and gave place at our table⁸.

Active participation

60. In the formative task, it is necessary that *all the members of the community be actively involved*, according to their own roles and abilities (Cf. Bdgm 17). It is also their duty to participate in the *formative mission of the Church*, of which they are sons (Cf. PI 23).

1.7 FORMATIVE STYLE

Attitudes and relational method

61. Our style, besides basing on principles and methods, bases it self on some interior attitudes, which give to our educational activity the Guanellian character: *benevolence, evangelical compassion and solicitude* (Cf. Bdgm 32-34).

The benevolence spurs to *surround with affection*, to *value the gifts of nature and grace* of each one and to *offer diverse and adequate educational proposals*. The compassion leads to *prevention, encouragement and Companionship*. The solicitude urges the *dedication* and the *trust in the Providence* (Cf. Bdgm 23-30).

At the same time, we avail of specific relational methods such as: *esteem and respect, trust and optimism, confidence and dialogue, simplicity and cheerfulness, gentleness and strength* (Cf. Bdgm 35-38).

A “Guanellian” Environment

62. Principles, attitudes and relational methods contribute to permeate our surroundings with *family spirit, commitment and serenity, morality and religion* (Cf. Bdgm 39-41), which characterize our style.

1.8 MEANS OF FORMATION

63. In order to attain the formative objectives we adopt some *means* which the Christian tradition, the consecrated life and our religious family retain them as of particular efficacy. That is:

- Word of God;
- sacramental-liturgical life;
- prayer;
- spiritual direction;
- dialogue for human growth;
- dialogue with the formators;

⁸ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *Come with me*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1993, 326).

- practice of evangelical counsels;
- fraternal life in community;
- cultural and professional preparation;
- apostolic activities;
- work;
- time for relaxation;
- project of life

Word of God

64. With the hearing of the *Word of God, pure and perennial source of spiritual life* (PC 6), it is possible to establish a personal relationship with the divine Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The *Gospels, heart of all the Scriptures* merit a special veneration (DV 18). They, together with other New Testament writings help us to know the attitudes of Christ Jesus, his “*surpassing knowledge* (Phil. 3:8), his style of life, his options for the Kingdom and his preference for the poor.

With the “*Lectio divina*”, a method based on four aspects of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation, we have the possibility of reading again our history in the light of the Word and “*recognize the intention of the providence in the events*” (C 31) and also acquire a kind of super natural instinct to avoid being conformed to the mentality of the world (Cf. VC 94; Pdv 47).

Sacramental-liturgical life

65. The *Liturgy - summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; the fount from which all her power flows* (SC 10) - *builds up those who are in the Church, making of them a holy temple of the Lord, [...] to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ* (SC 2).

In the Eucharist is “*contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch and the living bread which gives life through the Holy Spirit* (PO 5).

We establish an evermore-profound communion with Lord Jesus by participating daily in the Sacrament, which makes him present and *draws us to [...] Christ’s insistent love* (SC 10). Through regular *Eucharistic adoration*, we experience the joy of his friendly and sanctifying presence.

From the Eucharist celebrated and adored springs forth the commitment of continual conversion and necessary purification. For this, *with the sacrament of reconciliation received frequently with confidence in divine mercy, we celebrate the paschal grace of a new heart* (C 36).

Prayer

66. Another essential means of formation is the *prayer*.

With the *Liturgy of the hours* we extend the action of grace proper to the Eucharist and sanctify our daily activities.

The *personal prayer* is closely related with the Liturgy of the hours through which each one of us builds up the “inner man”, gives solidity and quality to the communion with God and the brothers and regenerates spiritually the gift of one self in the apostolate.

The *mental prayer* is also an important moment: *The Founder considered it an indispensable form of prayer and a guarantee of perseverance for us* (C 34).

Through the *daily examination of conscience*, we entrust ourselves to the Spirit so that it becomes light of the way and helps to trace the signs of the will of God in the events of life, also when they are covered with confusion and pain.

Everyday, through *Rosary, the Angelus* or by other ways, we invoke the Virgin Mary, joyful in having her as mother in our fraternity (Cf.C 35).

We seek *moments of silence*, which is not merely absences of noises and words, neither escape from history nor withdrawal into oneself but it is a full docility to the call of the word and grace. Therefore, we establish *suitable time for monthly retreats and annual spiritual exercises* (C 37).

Spiritual direction

67. Thanks to *spiritual direction* each one of us is helped to respond with generosity to the suggestions of the Spirit and to direct ourselves resolutely towards holiness (Cf.. VC 95).

The documents of the Church insist on the necessity that all, especially those who are in first formation should have a spiritual director to whom they can open their conscience in humility and confidence. (Cf. c 239§2, 240§2, 246; OT 8).

Dialogue for human growth

68. During the initial stages of formation, when it is necessary to help the person to know himself and discern the authenticity of the vocational answer, it seems more useful and sometimes necessary the *dialogue for human growth* which, unlike the spiritual direction, is more of psychological nature⁹. It is offered by the formator, if he is competent or by an expert in the science of formation.

Dialogue with the formators

69. The *personal dialogue* with the formator is a *chief instrument of formation [...], a practice of irreplaceable and commendable effectiveness, which should take place regularly and with a certain frequency* (VC 66).

Practice of evangelical counsels

70. Through the profession of evangelical counsels, lived *according to the Spirit and the particular law of the Institute* (C 41), we not only place in Christ the sense of our life, but we are concerned to reproduce in us, to the possible extent, *that form of life which He chose when he came into the world* (LG 1).

For a singular gift from God, making our own the virginal love of Christ, we live the vow of *chastity*, in asceticism, in love and fraternal joy (Cf. C 42-47).

Following Christ poor, in the spirit of the Founder, we practice *personal and communitarian poverty* according to the evangelical Spirit, the requirements of the vow and the prescriptions of Canon Law (Cf. C 48-54).

⁹ Such a dialogue is held in the same esteem of spiritual direction and in close harmony with it. We are convinced that this can truly influence on the life of the person according to the measure in which the dialogue attains the goals proper to it..

To fulfill God's plan upon us, following the example of Christ, we live in *obedience* with filial love, in prayer and dialogue according to the Constitutions (Cf. C 55-60).

Fraternal life in community

71. The fraternal life in community constitutes one of the most precious values of our vocation. *We all make use of the best resources in order to create an environment suitable for fostering the development of each person [...]. On his part each one, without expecting to be carried by the other members, contributes actively to the growth of the community with the talents received, and strives to advance in holiness of life* (C 20; Cf. FIC 43)¹⁰.

The community will be what its members make it, therefore, more than *it can be used as a means of formation, it deserves to be lived and loved for what it is in the religious life, as the Church conceives it* (PI 26).

The *self giving for the common good* (C 22) is the fundamental inspiration, which comes from the first Christian community (Cf.. Acts. 2:42; 4:32). Therefore, with *a love that recognizes, sustains and surrounds those whom the Lord has given to us as brothers* (C 19), we commit ourselves so that the community becomes a *small communion of saints* (C 18)¹¹.

Cultural and professional preparation

72. Each one of us undertakes *the study* as a very important form of asceticism and fidelity to nourish their spiritual life and to open them selves with wisdom to a greater knowledge of God, of them selves and of the world (Cf. PI 68).

Under the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, each one cultivates the *in-depth biblical and theological study* (C 97). At the same time, tends to have *always better knowledge of the Founder and the Institute*.

It is necessary, then, the *study of the cultures* of the places where one lives and also the constant *updating in the professional and technical qualification*.

Apostolic activities

73. The apostolic activities in any age and in every stage have an educational and formative relevance to all of us. They lead us to remain united with Christ and live like him, who came *not to be served but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people* (Mt 20:28); They allow to make our own the project of the Founder in the commitment towards the poor and in the spirituality of action and make us to share the mission of the Church. *By dedicating ourselves with all our strength to the fulfillment of this mission we find our way of sanctification and merit* (C 61).

¹⁰ Initiation into the hardships and joys of community life takes place in the community itself. *Through the fraternal life each one learns to live with those whom God has put at his or her side, accepting their positive traits along with their differences and limitations. Each one learns to share the gifts received for the building up of all, because "to each is given the manifestation of the spirit for the common good".* (NC 67).

¹¹ The members of the community will realize *each day under the action of the Holy Spirit, allowing itself to be judged and converted by the Word of God, purified by penance, constructed by the Eucharist, and vivified by the celebration of the liturgical year* (PI 27).

Work

74. God has said: *You will eat the bread earned by the sweating of your front* (Gen. 3:19). The Founder held in high esteem the formative effectiveness of *work*; He wanted the disciples to be ready for hard work, trained to the daily martyrdom of hard work.

We also therefore, assume the common law of labor (Cf. PC 13). We collaborate with the Providence for our maintenance and we make ourselves useful to others (Cf. C 70).

On this sense the work together with prayer (Cf C 63), common life (CfC 92) and apostolic activity (Cf C 70) becomes a *motif of personal and communitarian asceticism* and strengthens the sense of belonging.

Time for relaxation

75. Fair *time for relaxation and physical exercise* - in view of a healthy mental hygiene and regaining of energy and the necessary appreciation of natural values (Cf. R 47) facilitate the formative action nourishing serenity, peace and joy (Cf.. FLC 28)

Project of life

76. The reference to the above mentioned means should be concretely traceable in every *project of life*: personal, community and Institute. The term project refers to an elaboration of a path towards an ideal; it involves a dynamic tension towards what has not been realized yet.

Through the *personal plan of life* one lives the vocation in a state of continuous, progressive and global discernment. It is not concerned therefore with a simple program of prayer, fraternal communion and works of charity..., but with a necessary mediation to plan and to live the whole existence in the unity of life (Cf. C 26)¹².

The *community program*, elaborated by the members of the community, led by the superior, aims to order better our consecrated life, so that there is “more life” and “more consecration”. The definition of such a plan, takes advantage also of the revision of community and apostolic life (Cf. C 72.143).

Both the personal plan of life and the community program accept also the directives and the commitments undertaken in other more *general operational plans*. That is, like the guidelines from various levels of Governance and the Church, which will be employed in the particular context of each community and personal situation.

¹² The *examination of the conscience and the spiritual direction* are a privileged ambit to verify one's own plan of growth in perfection of charity. (Cf. C 36).

2. NETWORK OF MEDIATIONS

Mediation between the Divine call and the personal answer

77. Inspiring ourselves to the love of God, who follows his children with solicitude, so that they may attain the fullness of life, we become cooperators with the Father, in order that every one progresses toward the maturity of their person in Christ the Lord (Cf. C 69).

Between the call of the Lord and the response of the person, there is a series of mediations, which configure to a true and proper “network”:

- The *grace* of the Lord
- Everyone of *us*
- The *Church*
- The *Institute*
- The *local community*
 - *religious* community
 - *formative* community
 - *educational-pastoral* community
- The living contest
- The poor

In this network every knot and every stitch, in different ways and roles, lead to the Mystery of God, of the Church and of the consecrated person. When it is taken from any point (= persons, events and contexts), it is possible to perceive the educational action of God and the responsibility of the one who is called¹³.

The grace of the Lord

78. Our Constitutions confirm clearly that in the formative process *the grace of the Lord operates* (C 85) and everything concurs *for the good of those who love God* (Rom. 8:28).

God is the *protagonist par excellence* (PdV 69); his grace *gives fecundity to the educational work* (Bdgm 19). Through the Spirit, He moulds in the heart the attitudes of the Son and the evangelical inspiration of the Founder.

Each one of us

79. No one could substitute us in the responsible freedom, which we have as individuals (Cf. PdV 69). For this reason, *each one of us* has to assume personally the responsibility for one’s own formative experience (Cf. C 85). Such responsibility is

¹³ *All consecrated persons may be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, in every age and season, in every human ambient and context, from every person and every culture open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them. But above all they must learn to be formed by everyday life, by their own community, by their brothers and sisters, by everyday things, ordinary and extraordinary, by prayers and by apostolic fatigue, in joy and in suffering, until the moment of death* (SafC 15).

measured, in particular, on the openness to the mystery, on the capacity to have a grateful and open heart.

The Church

80. The Church is the community agent, which has the grace and the responsibility to accompany those who are called by the Lord (PdV 65). We are in fact raised up in the Church and for the Church: it recognizes our Founder, approves our Institute and our Constitutions, accepts our religious profession and makes us to share in its mystery, prayer and mission. In the Church, which by its nature is memory and sacrament of the presence of Jesus amidst us (Cf. PdV 65), we find the sustenance for our baptismal and consecrated life (Cf. PI 22).

To develop, the sense of not only being *with*, but *inside the Church* (Cf. PI 24), we cannot but follow its directives, in obedience to its laws (Cf. C 117) and its pastors (Cf. PI 25).

The Institute

81. The Institute, “*places among its primary duties the task of assuring its members a solid formation. In fact the harmonious development of the person, the apostolic vigor and the unity of the Institute depend largely on this element. After the example of Jesus who prepared the disciples for their mission, (it) educates them in mind and heart* (C 82); it helps them to discern their vocation and accompanies them so that in fidelity they could realize themselves as apostles of charity. It animates confreres and communities for a daily renewal of their religious and apostolic life (Cf. R 147).

The Congregation, at various levels of Governance, elaborates the formative directives (Cf. R 154) and through the local community, makes its members to share the treasures of spirituality left to us by the Founder.

The local community

82. The formation needs the local community *as its natural environment: the confreres experience the values of consecrated life in it, share the joys and labors of the apostolate and acquire greater availability and self-control* (C 85).

In reality, it is shaped as *religious, formative and educational-pastoral community*. The exemplary life of the members and the respect for the roles given to each one as foreseen by the ecclesial laws and the norms of the Institute is always of great relevance.

A. Religious community

83. The *religious community* constitutes the animating core of the life and mission of the House. It has to be *in continuous formation* (Cf. PI 66-69), and have impact in the formation *to the extent that it permits each one of its numbers to grow in fidelity to the Lord according to the charism of his or her institute* (PI 27).

B. Formative community

84. The *formative community* operates particularly in the initial formation stage and is constituted by *formators, their collaborators and those in formation*.

- The *formators*, as mature brothers (Cf. VC 66), keeping *in mind and heart the spirit of the preventive method* (C 85), accompany those in formation to achieve the formative objectives and act with benevolence and firmness, also when the decisions can create sufferings (Cf. PI 31; VC 66). Masters and witnesses, respectful experts of human heart and the ways of the Spirit, capable to answer to all the exigencies of the candidates and the Institute, they are the chief in-charges of the formative community. Therefore, they need to possess a solid theological, pedagogical, spiritual, apostolic and charismatic formation.
- The *collaborators*, in close unity of spirit and action (Cf. PI 32), contribute to give unity and clarity to the goals of formation and its methodologies (R 211) and together with the formators, constitute the *formative team*.
- The formative action demands also the collaboration between all the *in-charges of formation at various phases*, to ensure the necessary educational continuity.
- *Those in formation* are privileged members of the formative community, called in the first place to involve themselves in the community life.

C. Educational-pastoral community

85. The *educational-pastoral community* includes all those who according to the proper role and competence realize actively the mission of the Institute. It is a guarantee of faithfulness to the charismatic inspiration and constitutes by itself a *proposal and way of education* (Bdgm 53). Especially, it offers to our candidates the opportunity to verify his attitudes, to start on the service of poor and collaborate with the laity. But its action has to respect the guidelines of the formators.

The vital context

86. Both the *cultural context* of the person and that of the *apostolic activities* have a strong formative influence and they contribute in giving a “form” to our consecrated life.

Each one of us is called to know “to situate’ oneself in the local culture incarnating the charismatic and Gospel values. In this process of *inculturation* both the life situation and the study ambient reveal to be further formative mediations.

The *apostolic activity environment* also moves us to *form our selves together with the laity* who collaborate with us on different way.

The poor

87. Another important formative mediation concerns the *poor*, who evangelize us in their condition. They are the most eloquent sign of Jesus Christ, humiliated and suffering; their presence makes us enter into the mystery of his Heart. They help us to understand *the preeminence of love over intelligence, self-sufficiency and beauty* (Bdgm 6).

3. THE CONVERGING PLURALITY OF DIMENSIONS AND LEVELS

Dimensions and different levels

88. The formation regards the areas of all the personal experiences. This regards in particular human, spiritual and charismatic dimensions.

The human dimension refers to the character, the inclinations, and the difficulties of the person; the *spiritual dimension* concerns the *sequela Christi* in the Catholic Church; the *charismatic dimension* regards our charism of foundation.

Every dimension includes *various levels*, in relation to God, one's own personality and others.

The formative process, therefore, is characterized as formation of *whole person* and extends to the *entire course of life*. Keeping in mind the conscious and the unconscious aspects of the person, we turn to the profound feelings and the motivations of actions in a special way.

Interdependent and converging dimensions

89. Being Dimensions and levels of the person in his uniqueness, they are closely *interdependent and converging* (Cf. RC 4). We propose therefore, a formative itinerary organized not according to independent sectors with the moments separated rigidly among them, but harmonized in a unitary and integral prospective.

The quality of growth of every dimension depends from the quality of other dimensions. Each one, then, develops them according to the degree of his knowledge, according to the degree of virtue he possesses, and above all according to the grace he can obtain from God¹⁴.

3.1 HUMAN DIMENSION

Integral part of formation

90. The Human dimension requires to be developed as integral part of an anthropology, which accepts the entire truth about man. It has, therefore, to open itself and reach fullness in the spiritual and charismatic formation.

It is an essential foundation for the construction of personalities of stable identity, healthy relations, and responsible commitment in view of the ministry (Cf. PdV 43).

Formation in affective maturity

91. Along the formative process, the formation in affective maturity receives a qualifying and decisive value, *as the outcome of the education in a true and responsible love*

¹⁴ L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity* (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 127).

(Cf. PdV 43). It is fundamental to open oneself to the centrality of love in the human experience. There cannot be a vocational growth without a sufficient *affective maturity*, through which one succeeds to live the gift of him self.

The authentic affective education other than presenting the elements of charity has to consider also the *psychic dynamics*, which make it possible.

Sexual maturity

92. *Sexual maturity* is closely linked to affective formation (Cf. PI 39) that enables to accept ones own *masculine identity* as an integral part of one's self and to acknowledge its value and the oblatory sense¹⁵.

The force of sexuality generates some needs, but the consequent actions have to be result of conscious and free choice. Between the world of impulses and actions there is the ability to *decide*, to *master*¹⁶ and *transform* the need into gift.

In agreement with the teachings of the Church, the formative commitment has to guarantee that those who are admitted to consecrated life are fit in this ambit¹⁷.

The *virtues of chastity* is the premise and content of the affective-sexual maturity, which leads "to experiencing and showing...a sincere, human, fraternal and personal love, capable of sacrifice, following Christ's example, a love for all and for each person" (PdV 50).

Formative elements

93. The attention to the human-affective dimension calls for specific **formative elements**, which are aimed at the knowledge of one's self and which, using increasingly the ambit of freedom always more extensive, aims at attaining a sufficient affective, intellectual and volitive maturity.

A. knowledge of one's self

94. The *Self-knowledge* means the consciousness of both one's own qualities and the limits. For this task of personal introspection and understanding more deeply the

¹⁵ The commitment in the consecrated life foresees that a sufficient affective and sexual maturity should be reached in coherence with one's own masculine identity. In order to consecrate to God one own life, assuming a *sponsal union* with the Church and the duty to exercise the *spiritual paternity* (Cf. DMP 58), each one has to be by principle *fit to matrimony and to paternity*.

¹⁶ The formative itinerary will help the person in a special way to overcome the difficulties related to the area of sexuality by knowing the real causes which are often hidden. To master the weaknesses in this ambit, there is a need not only of the proposal not to fall into temptations, but to know always to take distance and be always less dependant.

¹⁷ The Church, in fact, *cannot admit to the seminary or to Holy Orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called "gay culture". Such persons, in fact, find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. [...] Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem - for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the Diaconate* (ICD 2). Respecting the guidelines of the Church, we commit to offer a sufficient help to those persons who have "feared homosexual tendencies" or "transitory homosexual tendencies", so that they have the possibility to resolve them, in a permanent way, before the admission to Novitiate.

exigencies of consecrated life and ministerial Priesthood, it will be useful to avail psychological consultations through the service of competent specialists¹⁸.

In respect of the norm¹⁹, *already at the time of the young men's admission to the formation House, their suitability for living a celibate life should be carefully assessed so that a moral certainty regarding their emotional and sexual maturity may be reached before they are [perpetually professed and/or] ordained*²⁰.

Everyone will work on the integration of his own past story: he will be reconciled with his past and will seek the profound meaning of personal vocational history. The elaboration of a *personal project* to attain the objectives with regard to the human dimension is also of great utility.

B. Affective and effective freedom

95. Human maturity, and in particular affective maturity, *demand a limpid and strong kind of formation which is represented as convinced and cordial obedience to the truth of his own being [...], as the way and the fundamental content of the authentic realization of himself* (PdV 44).

Since freedom consists in “being able to realize oneself according to the truth of one’s own being”, the *affective freedom* can be found in loving what one is and what one is called to be. Seen in this sense “*freedom demands that the person be truly his own master, decided to battle and overcome the various forms of egoism [...], generous in the dedication and service to one’s fellow creature* (PdV 44).

The affective freedom demands an efficacious attention to the *effective freedom*, that is, the control of the resistances, which prevent to appropriate the sentiments of Christ. It helps the positive resolution of inner conflicts and the self control of emotions and impulses, *in a way that whole life is based on surrounded with love* (Bdgm 86) and every crisis be lived as an occasion of growth²¹.

It is essential, therefore, to *educate both the liberties*²², never separated from the affective-sexual, intellectual and volitive formation.

¹⁸

¹⁹ The canon 642 affirms: *Superiors are to exercise vigilant care to admit only those who, besides being of required age, are healthy, have a suitable disposition and have sufficient maturity to undertake the life which is proper to the Institute. If necessary, the health, disposition and maturity are to be established by experts without prejudice to can. 220. The canon 220 attests: No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys, or violate the right every person to protect his or her privacy* (Cf. c 241.1029).

²⁰ *Address of John Paul II to the Congregation for Catholic Education, 1/2/2005. In the prospective of absolute primacy of the grace over vocation, the contribution of psychology could also be helpful not only to exclude the persons with insufficient psycho-physical equilibrium, but above all help to remove the obstacles of the vocational growth or to remove the resistances to the full effectiveness of formation.*

²¹ The crisis is normal and positive element of a process of formation, also permanent.

²² In order to broaden the spaces of freedom and attain *purser and more mature life of faith* (GS 62), our action will help the person to be “**free from**” what, inhibiting the human and Christian growth, will

C. Formation of the heart, of the mind and of the will

96. The elements intended for the *formation of the heart, of the mind and of the will* aim at a sufficient maturity, so that the heart of the person be free to love or to grasp as “beautiful” what the mind discovers as “true” and the will experiences as “good and dutiful”.

- Through the *formation of the heart*, we try to be always more attracted by the beauty of the vocational project. At the same time, we admit the richness and limits of our attitudes, so that everyone directs the force to the service of values.
- With the *formation of the mind* we commit ourselves to develop the gifts of intuition, intelligence, reasoning and judgment in a continuous opening to and search for truth. We progress in the reflection to interiorize the truth and communicate it to others, making it to become Criteria of discernment in the decisions.
- Through the *formation of the will* we tend to consolidate ourselves in the commitment for the goodness and the acquisition of good habits. We work to make our own the Institute’s project and be tireless in charity.

Clear signs of human maturity

97. Self-knowledge, always more authentic freedom, maturity of the heart-mind-will, facilitate the person

- to acquire a *clear personal identity*
- to cultivate *healthy social affective relations*,
- to be *responsibly and constantly* committed, in *prayer* and in work.
- To develop the human qualities, needed to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities (PdV 43): friendship, truthfulness, wisdom, faithfulness, prudence, sense of justice, modesty...

These elements constitute clear *signs of human maturity*, whose presence, according to age and the gift of nature and grace, is so necessary for an efficient continuity in the formation process.

Criteria of evaluation

98. The human maturity has to be evaluated in the light of the following *Criteria*:

- *stable identity*²³ and *steadfastness of the soul*;
- *healthy self-esteem* and *integration of the lights and shadows of one’s own personality*²⁴;

make it fragile in replying to any vocational and apostolic appeals. Then, it will make him **free in** Christ, free to imitate his gestures, desires, projects... Finally, the person will be disposed to be **free to** live the values, which give “Guanellian form” to our consecration.

²³ Self-identity must be seen as a sense of unity and interior continuity, which is maintained stable in time and in the different situations of life; and also in the capacity to remain in agreement with the values embraced.

- equilibrium between *individuality and alterity*²⁵ ;
- *pondered decisions and correct judgment* of men and events;
- *system of values* as factors which motivate one's choices;
- continuous strengthening of *elements of maturity*.

3.2 SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Presupposes the Human dimension

99. The second **dimension** which constitutes the human being and which must be present in dynamic formation is the *spiritual* dimension. It presupposes a previous attention to human dimension and invokes a solid spiritual formation, open to transcendence and animated by the evangelical newness.

Communion with God

100. Our spiritual formation *has the principal purpose of immersing religious in the experience of God and to help them to perfect it gradually in their lives* (PI 35). Every man is called to be born of water and the Spirit (Cf. Jn. 3:5) and become son in the Son. *The educational process of a spiritual life, seen as a relationship and communion with God [and as following Jesus], derives and develops from this fundamental and irrepressible religious need* (PdV 45).

Such a formation is common to all the faithful, because it is rooted in the Baptism. But for us, called to consecrated life, it assumes specific connotations of the Servant of Charity and of his ministry.

Specific formative contents

101. Given the nature of the Consecration and the mission, which the religious is called to fulfill in the Church, the *Potissimum institutioni* refers to the contents proposed by *Optatam totius* (Cf. OT 8; PI 6.34).

Such contents aim at

- a progressive consciousness of the *paternal love of God*;
- the ability to correspond as *sons of God* and *brothers*;
- the consolidation of the *option for Christ Jesus*;
- the continuous *conversion*;
- the maturity in the *moral and theological virtues*.

²⁴ The construction of a *healthy self-esteem* helps the person to harmoniously compose his own virtues and his own limits and makes him increasingly more capable of not emphasising his gifts and of knowing how to smile benevolently on his defects.

²⁵ Each one, in fact, is distinct from others, though being in relation of accepting other, sharing and communion.

Paternal love of God

102. The certainty that *God is such a generous Father who gives us his Heart and [...] knows our heart and follows our footsteps* (C 10), inspires the contents of the formative process and infuses sentiments of confidence in his Providence.

Filial and fraternal answer

103. The need to live a *filial relationship with God, the Father*, springs forth in us from this gift. We receive with gratitude the love in order to give it back to Him as sons and to *live it among us as brothers* and bestow it among the poor.

Option for Christ

104. The truest example of reply we have is that of the only-begotten Son, who out of love and in obedience to the plan of salvation, offers himself for the redemption of brothers even to death on the cross.

We find the foundation of the specific vocation to the consecrated life in Christ and therefore we opt to follow him conforming ourselves all the more to his chaste, poor and obedient way of life.

As his disciples we are called to a lively interpersonal relationship with Jesus: the affection and the love are invested on the divine "Thou" with whom "to stay"²⁶ and later be sent to do little good.

Process of continuous conversion

105. The relationship with Christ calls for a continuous process of *intellectual, moral and religious conversion*.

- With the *intellectual conversion* the person is lead to recognize and believe in the truth. To this aim, the intellectual formation obeys to a fundamental demand of the human intelligence by which one "participates in the light of God's mind" (PdV 51) and opens himself to the understanding of the created things. In particular, the philosophical and the theological studies help us to tend toward love of the truth, the personal involvement and contribute to keep alive our inner world²⁷.
- Through the *moral conversion*, we are open to Good as a value in it self and we are ready to do good for Good. A strong moral tension is fundamental to remain faithful to Gospel and to life and to take courage to overcome evil²⁸.

²⁶ *And he chose twelve to stay with Him...* (Mk 3:14). The values are not sufficient to maintain alive a Christian as well a consecrated life, if there is no involvement and personal rapport with God, which gives strength and renews our total self-giving.

²⁷ Philosophy helps to see with mind what one believes (Cf. PdV 52). The theological studies lead to a *complete and unified vision of the truths which God has revealed in Jesus Christ and of the Church's experience of faith* (PdV 54).

²⁸ In this regard, the *Basic document for the Guanellian Mission* affirms: In our facilities we prevent and remove all offending moral character. We propose attitudes and behavior which makes life beautiful in

- The *religious conversion* solicits us to pass from the “many loves” to the absolute love of God through a great love for Jesus and the Church. In this way, the path towards the sanctity of life is open. The Church, besides the mediations of the Word and the Sacraments, *has always invited believers to seek and to find in the Saints and above all in the Virgin Mother of God [...], the model, the strength and the joy needed to live a life in accordance with God’s commandments and the Beatitudes of Gospel* (VS 107)²⁹.

Theological and moral virtues

106. At the origins of the consecrated life, there is Christian life in which the person touched by the love of the Father feels the necessity to respond to it with all one’s self placing his gifts of nature and grace at the service of the Kingdom.

We bring to maturity the theological and moral virtues by seeking a balance on *discipline, freedom and responsibility* (R 195). We consolidate ourselves in *prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance*, and also in the *faith* in God the Father, in the *compassionate charity* of the Son and in the *hope*, fruit of the Spirit, which animates and vivifies everything. By practicing these virtues, we acquire the spirit of prayer and obtain strength in the vocation and other virtues.

Signs of spiritual maturity

107. The progressive awareness of the paternal love of God and the ability to respond to it, the option for Christ Jesus in an attitude of continuous conversion and virtuous maturity, enable so that the person

- experiences an intimate and joyful *Communion* with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit;
- searches Christ in *prayer*, in the faithful *meditation of the Word of God*, in the active participation to the *liturgical-sacramental life* of the Church, and in the *neighbor*;
- cultivates *the friendship with the person of Jesus*, and lives his paschal mystery;
- grows in the *zeal* to evangelize the world, winning all men to Christ, especially the poor;
- loves and reverences the most Blessed *Virgin Mary* and learns like her to radicate in the virtues and in the daily offering of oneself.

Criteria of evaluation

108. The Criteria of evaluation of the spiritual maturity – which presupposes human maturity – could be listed thus:

- ability to make a *free choice* of vocation and of *concrete actuation*³⁰ ;

the eyes of God and men: uprightness, justice, mutual understanding, harmony and solidarity for the vulnerable (Cf. Bdgm 41).

²⁹ *The life of holiness [...] brings to full expression and effectiveness the three-fold and unitary munus propheticum, sacerdotale et regale which every Christian receives as a gift by being born again [...] in Baptism* (VS 107).

³⁰ The vocational decision calls for the consciousness that every baptized – for the *common vocation* – is called to *sequela Christi* that is actualized in different *particular vocations*.

- Conscious perception of the vocation as *initiative and gift of God*, to be lived *responsibly* and with *gratitude* together with others;
- knowing to *see Christ in the poor* and serving them with oblation love;
- constant and concomitant presence of the *necessary assumptions* to the demands of our consecrated life: union with God, following of Christ and attitude to live the style of life, ability to live community life, ecclesial Spirit and sensibility towards the poor;
- continuous strengthening of the *elements of maturity*.

3.3 CHARISMATIC DIMENSION

Animating and unifying principle

109. The charismatic dimension is fundamental in the formative process of consecrated life. Around the charism, the *animating and unifying principle*, each one is called to make the synthesis of the human and spiritual dimension. In fact, both the dimension, demand to be expressed with the specific “color” of the guanellianity. In the charism, the *two polarities* of the path of vocational maturity have to be recognized: the *identity* and *the belongingness*. The elements of *asceticism*, *mysticism* and the *mission* are to be considered within these polarities. These elements have to interact among them along the formative *itinerary*, to favor the development of the person and the community.

The Guanellian charism

110. The Guanellian charism is *a gift from Above*. The Spirit generates in the heart that *particular sensibility to perceive and love*

- *God as loving and provident Father,*
- *Jesus Christ as brother and redeemer,*
- *the neighbor as our family,*
- *the poor as our beloved.*

In force of the charism, we feel participants of the filial love of Jesus towards the Father and of his compassionate charity. The charity of Christ places us in the heart of the Church: it gathers us; consecrates us and sends us to the brothers - especially the most needy - in imitation of Him, Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan. We recognize in this gift the presence of the Spirit, which nourishes in us *the fire of charity, sustains us in our hope and becomes the source of fruitfulness*(C 1)³¹.

³¹ The reference to charity, inspiring principle of the Founder and strength of the Institute, synthesis of our spirituality and our mission, is already in the name with which we are called in the Church: *Servants of Charity*. Our very title *reminds us that the charity is reason why the Lord gathers us together, consecrates us for Himself and sends us to the poor* (C 12).

The Guanellian Spirit

111. Following the footsteps of the Founder, the *answer to this gift of God*, gives form to the *Guanellian spirit* which expresses our *way of being and working in* the Church and in the world.

The Constitutions (Cf. C 9-16) affirm that it is proper to our *Spirit* to:

- *love the Father* with filial affection and have faith in the Providence;
- contemplate the supreme revelation of the love of God in the heart *of Christ* pierced on the Cross and present in the Eucharist;
- cultivate among us the *bond of charity*, as a strength of the Institute;
- live in *family spirit*, imitating the Family of Nazareth;
- spread the charity of Christ, in *communion with the Church*, with *apostolic zeal* and with the *preferential option for the poor*;
- *pray and suffer*, as disciples of Jesus, faithful even to Calvary;
- *welcome Mary* as our *Mother of Providence and model* of Consecration;
- *follow the Founder*, as father who still urges us to do works of good and as living rule like in the beginning.

Specific formative contents

112. In the light of our constitutional affirmations and the formative guidelines for the consecrated life, the contents with regard to the charismatic dimension tend to

- make grow the *identity* of the Servant of Charity,
- cultivate the sense of belonging to the Institute,
- live in docility the *mystic* experience,
- follow a genuine *ascetic path*,
- and assume with zeal the *apostolic ministry*.

Identity

113. We find the *roots* of our identity in the Guanellian charism and discover the distinctive traits of the Servant of Charity in it. Our *title* corresponds to what we are and what we are called to be in the Church: disciples and apostles of Jesus³², as Brothers, deacons and priests.

The characteristics of the Guanellian identity are outlined particularly in our *Constitutions* and referred systematically in the present *Ratio Formationis*. They take form in the dynamic and harmonious convergence of all the elements of the *formative process*.

Sense of belonging

114. The charism needs to be lived with the people of God, and in particular among us who have received the same gift. Every one shall find in it that relationship which is expressed in the '*surname*'; in relationship to the Institute shall live the relationship of family, her history, her spirit, her style...

³² *Apostolic and charitable action belong to the very nature our Institute: it is its grace and identity* (C 62).

The charism, therefore, generates the *sense of belonging to the Congregation*. Everything is richness of *grace*, of *persons* and *values*: so a *gift* and a *mission*³³. It is that *bond of Communion in charity*, so precious in our tradition³⁴.

The sense of belonging demands *to take part effectively*³⁵ and *affectively*³⁶ to our religious family. Therefore, we need to cultivate the sense of belonging in all the stages of formation.

Mysticism

115. The peculiar *experience of filial communion with God the Father* lived by the Founder prolongs in us, according to the measure with which, sustained by the grace, we participate on it.

The Spirit induce us to live in filial relationship with the Father, through a *simple and affectionate prayer*, which - in the contemplation of the Heart of Christ, pierced on the Cross and present in the Eucharist – makes us to understand to what extent we are loved and saved³⁷. From here begins the Guanellian mysticism, which, lived in communion with the Father and with the brothers, leads to the *participation in the apostolic mission of Christ the Lord* (Cf. C 39). The formation of charism, therefore, aims to make us live in fullness these elements of communion, to which we are called in virtue of Baptism and our specific vocation.

Asceticism

116. Our condition as pilgrims and sons for whom the Father longs, compels us to take advantage of the present time by making it a journey of continuous *conversion*. In the twin-word *to pray and to suffer*, the Founder indicated us the ascetic program for the progress of each one and of the Congregation in sanctity (Cf. C 15).

It is necessary that each one knows to live a *relationship with God* always more intense, to mature in an *always more authentic personality*, and to grow in the *fraternal love* and in the effective *practice of charity*.

³³ In the daily unfolding of life, the sense of belonging places us under the eyes of the only Father and, *respecting the roles of each confrere* (C 75), makes us united in the mission and in the life of the Institute (Cf. C 75-80).

³⁴ The Spirit, in fact, unites us with a *special bond of charity* (C 4), *intended by the Founder to be the life of God poured forth in our hearts by the Spirit, and by the love of individuals who enjoy living and working together* (C 12).

³⁵ The sense of belonging *becomes effective* with the religious profession, thanks to which *the confrere becomes more intimately sacred to the Lord, dear to the brothers who surround him, a living stone in the structure of the Institute. He is assigned to the province in which he was admitted as a postulant, assumes the rights and duties of the Institute and as a sign of consecration receives the religious habit* (C 95).

³⁶ The sense of belonging *is affective* in the sense when we give ourselves to the Institute in confidence so that it leads us to God on the paths of charity and holiness; and when the Institute gives itself to us, sustaining our path of holiness and our apostolic witness. It is concerned about a reciprocal belonging, which involves the ways of the heart and love.

³⁷ Enriched by the presence of the brothers, we place ourselves in diligent hearing of the *Word of God* and are faithful *breaking of the Bread* (Cf. C 30-32).

- The *relationship with God* tends to model our lives on the Gospel, lived in the spirit of the Institute and in observance of the Rule (Cf. C 83)³⁸.
- To mature in an *always more authentic personality*, we try to overcome the egoism and the tensions of the various ages, and to grow better in human, Christian and charismatic virtues. Therefore, we consider personal and community discipline of everyday *as a necessary part of the complete system of training* (OT 11)³⁹.
- In the *fraternal love*, as a *small communion of saint* (C 18), we grow in the reciprocal belonging and in the mutual edification. The fraternity provides to increase in us the spirituality of Communion (Cf. VC 51) and prepares the communities to be animating nucleus of the evangelical charity⁴⁰.
- Our *practice of the charity* assumes the *preventive method* as personal, communitarian and pastoral style of life. Such a method is based principally on the three pillars: the compassionate charity, the familiarity and the trust in the power of God grace (Cf. C 73; Bdgm 26)⁴¹.

Apostolic mission

117. Apostolic mission *belongs to the very nature our Institute: it is its grace and identity* (C 62)⁴². From the charity of Christ we are called *to share the commission received from the Father: to announce the good news of salvation to the poor* (C 61). The Providence entrusts us in particular the needy children and the youth, the elderly and dying men and women, the “good children” and the “flock without a shepherd” (Cf. C 65-68)⁴³. It

³⁸ The journey to be crossed remains that of silence, listening to the Word of God, Eucharistic adoration, community and personal prayer and discernment.

³⁹ The discipline is *necessary to inculcate self-control, to promote solid maturity of personality and the formation of those other traits of character which are most useful for the ordered and fruitful activity of the Church* (OT 11). In our tradition, the *work* and the *spirit of sacrifice* constitute a particular expression of the discipline. According to the program *To pray and to suffer*, we take our Cross every day. We allow the Spirit to enlighten us, with the *examination of conscience, fraternal correction and spiritual direction*. In the sacrament of *Penitence*, frequently celebrated, we receive the paschal grace which reconcile us with God, with ourselves and the brothers (Cf. C 36).

⁴⁰ If the community is a *closed system*, it will deal with its difficulties by withdrawing simply on itself. Instead, if it is a *open system* or tries to become so, it becomes a place of communion and witness.

⁴¹ The *compassionate charity* is made of compassion, solidarity and solicitude; the *familiarity* lived in an atmosphere of welcome, trust and benevolence in the possibility of human person; and the *trust in the power of God's grace* is the pillar of faith (Cf. C 73; Bdgm 26).

⁴² We can not speak of charism, apart from the mission and the uniqueness of our works. We realise that the gift of charism has to be lived for others; it is not in function of one's own perfection or that of the Institute, but is given so that the Church is not missing any gift of grace (cf. 1Cor 1:7).

⁴³ The Founder entrusts us with the task of sustaining the dying on their way to heaven, through the spreading of the *Pious Union of the Transit of St. Joseph*.

The apostolic charity then, with the *animation and the vocation ministry*, moves us to raise other collaborators to give continuity to life and mission of the Institute.

is a *universal mission*, lived in the *unique love* for God and for the brothers, according to the words of the Founder: *The whole world is your homeland* (C 80).

We carry out the *pastoral* (PdV 72) and *apostolic charity* (C 73) drawn from the Eucharist, from the intimacy with the heart of Christ and the fraternal Communion. Jesus, as good Shepherd, moves us to search for those who are lost; and as Good Samaritan urges us to bend over the poor, to treat the wounds and restate them in life, remembering the words: *Whenever you did this to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me* (Mt 25,40)⁴⁴. The fidelity to the apostolic mission demands therefore, a formation to the *sense of the mission* and the *apostolic spirituality*.

Signs of charismatic maturity

118. The identity of the Servant of Charity, the sense of belonging to the Congregation, the relationship with God, the ascetic itinerary and the apostolic mission, converge so that the person

- manifests in himself the *typical traits of the Servant of Charity*;
- takes part effectively and affectively in the *life of the whole Institute* and of his own community;
- shows to be *man of God* in prayer and in service;
- lives the daily conversion in *praying and suffering*;
- reveals *apostolic passion* for Christ, for the Church and the poor.

Criteria of evaluation

119. We hold useful the following *Criteria* to identify the maturity in the charismatic dimension:

- harmonious presence of sufficient *signs of Guanellian identity and sense of belonging*; in proportion to the formative stages;
- *real love* for the Institute and one's own community in their reality of gifts and limits;
- *assiduous commitment in the communion* with God, with the brothers and the poor;
- *free and responsible vocational decision* qualified by the evangelical charity, peaceful acceptance of the discipline and the ability to face the reality and resolve positively the conflict;
- *operative ability* for the apostolic life⁴⁵;
- *effectiveness in the mission*⁴⁶;
- continuous *strengthening of the elements of maturity*.

⁴⁴ Our passion for the poor is based on *clear and objective motivations*: it goes beyond the human compassion and the pure philanthropic service, because the poor are for us the icon of suffering Christ, participants - in time – of his passion.

⁴⁵ By *operative ability* we mean the “knowing to be” and “knowing to do” in psycho physical conditions proportionate to the age and the stages of formative itinerary.

⁴⁶ *Apostolic Effectiveness* means “ability” to convert the vocational gift into holiness of life and prophetic witness in mission. It differs from the *apostolic efficiency* meant as activism, competitiveness, worry about performance, anxious search of results...

4. THE THREE EDUCATIONAL DYNAMISMS

Educational dynamisms in twofold aspects

120. The formative ministry - always docile to the action of the Spirit - evolves through the essential *educational dynamisms* on the twofold *aspects of the Congregation and of who is called*.

To educate, to form and to accompany

121. The basic educational dynamisms are: to *educate*, to *form and to accompany*, which - though being distinct realities for their content and operations - *converge* among them and are *correlated to the formative style of the Institute*.

4.1 TO EDUCATE

Towards self-knowledge

122. To educate means “to bring out” (*e-ducere*) or to bring to a level of awareness what the person is, so that he can realize himself to the highest level of his potential.

The educational action leads to knowledge of oneself with his talents and limits. This search in depth is a necessary process, even though at times painful, in view of a coming back to new life⁴⁷.

Open to the action of God the Father

123. Education, before being fruit of human effort, is work of divine grace. God acts in it as Creator and *Father who continually educates each one of his children working directly within his or her heart* (Bdgm 19).

Towards the truth about oneself

124. The educational process, in itself, begins at the moment in which the individual begins to know his own personal reality, his both strong and weak points.

The education marks the passage from sincerity to the truth about oneself: from the subjective reading of one’s own sensations to the objective discovery of one’s interior reality, from the recognition of one’s sentiments to the understanding of real motivations of one’s action... Aiming at the truth about the person, education

⁴⁷ If carried out well, this work yields *considerable fruit* both on the spiritual level (it is sufficient to think of the awareness of one’s own limits) and on the psychological level (he who recognises his weaknesses is not scandalised by the weaknesses of others but he accepts them and bears with them).

helps to discover not only the hidden talents but also that immaturity which is particularly vulnerable and which is controlled with difficulty⁴⁸.

Educational Action

125. The work of introspection - typical of the examination of conscience, the retreats, the spiritual direction and when deemed opportune, the psychological consultation, sustains the person in identifying opportune *modus operandi* in order to be increasingly less dependent on one's immaturity. Only this way, the person could learn to transform his own limits as a "meeting place" with the Father.

4.2 TO FORM

Towards the identity of the Servant of Charity

126. It is not enough to educate, we need also to *form*, that is giving *form* to one's existence according to the *model of Jesus Christ*, who became servant out of love.

The formative action leads to be truly his *disciples*, to *the perfect man, in the measure according to the maturity of Christ* (Eph. 4:13). Following him, we live particularly the typical traits of the *Guanellian charism*.

The *physiognomy of the Servant of Charity* takes form in this way. After the "introspection in depth", proper to educational process, follows the dynamisms of *Resurrection*.

Formed by Jesus Christ

127. The formation of disciples is the *principal activity of the Son*. Since the aim of our consecration is that of conforming ourselves to Christ and interiorizing his sentiments, as well of living in fullness of humanity and sanctity, who better than Him - Master and Brother - could carry ahead this work?

From the truth about oneself to freedom

128. The formative dynamism enables so that the person moves *from the truth about oneself to freedom* proposed by Jesus. *The truth will set you free* (Jn. 8:32). That is, free to let one be attracted by the beauty of his face and the nobility of his sentiments, the goodness of his actions and the strength of the Gospel.

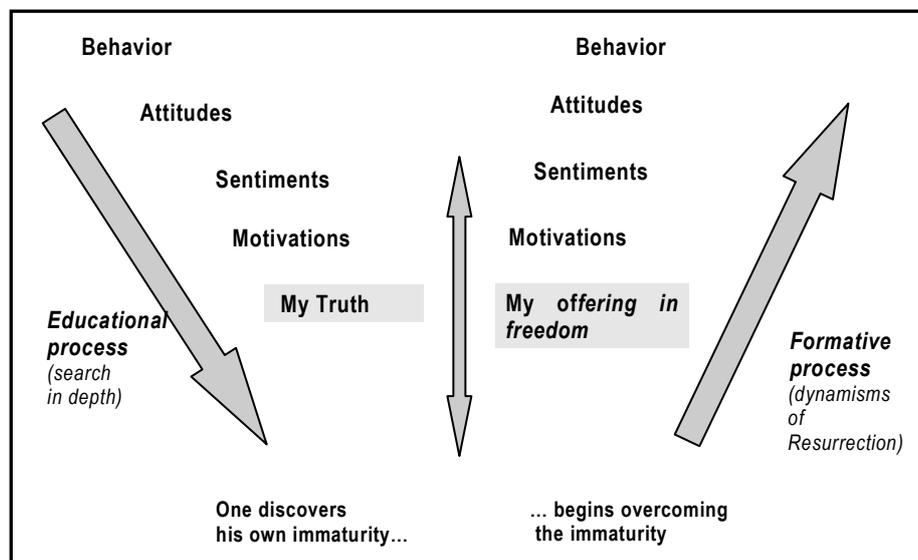
The work, at this point, is not only the removal of the immaturities, but is, above all, a constructive task. The way towards freedom tends to *unify all the expressions of the personality on the model, Christ Jesus*.

Formative Action

129. The formator has to help the persons entrusted to him to recognize the truth, the beauty, the bounty and the charity of Christ as *objectives* values of life. At the

⁴⁸ It is good to know the *roots* of this immaturity and what *role* it has in the dynamics of the person, as well to understand the *consequences* in the relationship with others, with God and with one self, in the apostolic community life, in the present and in future prospective.

same time, he will lead them to live such values also *subjectively*, as concrete expression of one's own project of life.



Discovery of the immaturity and the birth of new man: formative educational itinerary in the light of the paschal Mystery

4.3 TO ACCOMPANY

A service in faith and in discipleship

130. Accompanying is *walking by side* of the person along the track of vocational itinerary and help him to discern the will of God and answer to it in faithfulness. It is always a coral action of the Church, the Institute, the community and the individual confreres⁴⁹. More directly, this *service* is entrusted to the responsible of formation, the elder brother in faith and in discipleship⁵⁰.

With the accompanying, *the educational and the formative process is fulfilled in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ:*

- the person, beginning from the external behavior and verifying the attitudes, sentiments and vocational motivations, is accompanied above all to descend to one's own immaturities (*education*);
- and after having discovered, is helped to overcome them and climb up towards motivations, sentiments, attitudes and more authentic vocational behavior (*formation*).

⁴⁹ The term derives from *cum-panio*, "share the bread". To accompany means then, share something of vital nature like "the bread of the journey", that is, share one's own faith, the experience of the search and the God's love, the hope, the difficulties...

⁵⁰ During the presentation with regard to *Educational Dynamisms*, the reference to the *formator* has to be extended not only to the in-charge of formation of each stage, but to all the other *Educational Mediations*.

Action of the Holy Spirit

131. Accompanying recalls the style of Jesus with the disciples of Emmaus; but above all, it is the *action of the Holy Spirit* (Cf. PdV 69). The Spirit, in fact, works in us (Cf. C 37) and leads us to acquire always more the identity of the Servant of Charity.

Crossing from freedom to offering of oneself.

132. The active presence of the Spirit makes us always more available to accept the formative mediations, without expecting them to be perfect: the elder and the younger go ahead, both accompanied by the Spirit of God in the discipleship. Confidence and self giving become the fruit of this educational intervention and its path goes *from freedom to the offering of oneself*⁵¹.

Ways of Accompanying

133. Accompanying implies principally three *operations of synthesis concerning the charism*:

- guides the *re-reading* of one's own *human experience* in the light of the charismatic gift;
- aims to *qualify* the *spiritual life* as *sequela Christi* according to Guanellian traits;
- helps to *unify* ever more the demands of the discipleship with the *apostolic action*.

Each one, in this way, could learn to live one's own project of life in the *wisdom of the heart* (Cf. Sap 9:4)⁵².

Work of heart and of charity, with preventive method

134. The educational dynamisms of education, formation and accompanying, in line with the intuition of the Founder,

- are *especially work of the heart* (Bdgm 31)⁵³;
- are *based fully on charity*;
- founded on the *preventive method*, held by him as the soul of whole educational, pastoral and activities of assistance⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Who opens himself to the Spirit trusts also in his mediations; one who has learned to deliver himself over to the Spirit is not afraid to confide in an elder brother.

⁵² It is not an illumination of a moment, but a global vision of one's own identity in the mystery of the Son: it is a constant experience, extended to whole life; it is unity of faith and life, in the conversion and on-going formation; it is the ability to have true fraternal relationship and fulfill apostolic mission; it is the joy in serving God in the poor and the poor in God.

⁵³ The Founder sustained that *the heart opens up many paths which make us enter into the sanctuary of the heart* (L. GUANELLA, *1899 Regulations for SSH*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1990, 218). He said that *the ability to insinuate oneself into the hearts of the people and obtain what one desires is a gift from birth and is useful for every type of person* (L. GUANELLA, *Misms of Spirit*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1990, 61).

⁵⁴ With such method *the superiors surround the people under them with paternal affection. Brothers surround their brothers with solicitude so that no one, during the work of the day, may incur any kind of evil and in the path of life all may reach a happy goal* (L. GUANELLA, *1899 Regulations for SSH*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1990, 210).

Preparation of the formator

135. All this is demanding from the formator a series of interventions not certainly simple or automatic, which require in him a *particular preparation*.

- With regard to *education*, a good knowledge of the psychological dynamics of the person is required from him⁵⁵.
- As for the *formation*, he has to sustain the objective and subjective assimilation of the values, stimulating the involvement of the person and making “confession” of his own faith⁵⁶.
- In accompanying, it is necessary that he gives witness to a joyous life realized according to the project of God and shares the faith, the sufferings and the charity of Christ⁵⁷.

In effect, it is demanded from the formator to know to *combine the work of heart with the professionalism*, so that - making appeal to the Criterion of *giving Bread and the Lord* – he gives attention to the human, Christian and charismatic dimension of the person and facilitates his integral growth.

	TO EDUCATE	TO FORM	TO ACCOMPANY
<i>General Characteristic</i>	Towards the knowledge of oneself	Towards the identity of the Servant of Charity	A service in faith and in discipleship
<i>The action of the Trinity</i>	Action of God, the Father	Formed by Jesus Christ	Action of the Holy Spirit

⁵⁵ It is not so much demanded from him the expertise of a psychologist, rather than *wisdom of a spiritual man*, who refers also to human sciences to prepare the heart to the work of the Spirit.

⁵⁶ It deals with both *objective and subjective action*. For the *objectiveness* it is necessary that the formator should be in love with the vocation’s beauty and witnessing what he proposes to others. The subjectiveness, then, demands from him to know how to intervene wisely on the *heart* of the person so that he could love God, on the *mind* so that he could contemplate Him and on the *will* so that he could learn to fulfill his plans.

⁵⁷ Accompanying can be compared to the work of a farmer. After having tilled the earth (= education) and sown good seed (= formation), the good farmer must devote his attention to the young plant, which is growing; *The heart of a religious person is an orchard and a garden which, when cultivated, produces flowers and fruits of blessings. It is said that a man should give his life to his garden in the sense that he may everyday, and during all his life, find work to be done in order to gather the fruits of his labor.* Cf. L. GUANELLA. *The ways of (Divine) Providence* (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 4, USA, 1993, 242).

<i>Educational Achievement</i>	From sincerity to truth about oneself	From truth about oneself to freedom	From freedom to offering of oneself
<i>Educational action of the formator and ways of accompanying</i>	Work of introspection	Aims at objectification and subjective action	Operation of synthesis concerning the charism

The three fundamental educational dynamisms

Attitudes of the person who is called

136. Placing us more specifically in the prospective of the person who is called, as the first responsible of his own formation whether initial or permanent, we consider his *openness to Mystery*, his *faith in Providence* and his *docibilitas* as fundamental for the effectiveness of the three educational dynamisms.

- Since our vocation is *gift and Mystery*, it is necessary that each one place the *category of the “Mystery” as the key of interpretation* of one’s life. This openness to divine plan (Cf. Eph. 1:3-12) is a necessary condition to understand *the width, the length, the height and the depth, and know the love of Christ* (Eph. 3:18-19), during the course of one’s life.

At the same time, it is necessary to have *faith in the Providence*. We place in God the reason of our existence and we find the motivation and strength to overcome fears and delusions and free us from the temptation of placing our security only in the human strategy⁵⁸.

- The *docibilitas* is equally necessary as the availability of the disciple to allow the educational mediations to work⁵⁹. It is a tool for acquiring that formation *habitus* which - making one capable of continually learning from every kind of situation and from every kind of person, makes it possible to maintain youth and enthusiasm for his consecrated life⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Among these mediations the first is that of divine mediation, in relation to which the *docibilitas* could be compared to the disponibility of the clay allowing to be modeled by the potter: “O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? said the Lord. Behold, as the **clay** *is* in the potter’s hand, so *are* you in my hand. (Ger 8:5-6).

⁶⁰ The *docibilitas* is a clear vocational indicator, because allows the person to be available to make the journey towards oneself, discovering the immaturities which make the vocation less authentic and the

Characteristics of the formative itinerary

137. The educational dynamisms are presented in a *clear and unitary formative itinerary*, which, in following its goals has to keep in mind the progressive maturity of person. In fact, God himself does not upset normally the laws of human growth, but respects its times and its rhythms⁶¹.

The formative process, therefore, could not be limited to a rigid number of years, because it requires *a longer period of time* to be followed and respected without haste, but also without unjustified delay (Cf. RC 4)⁶².

Considering that the formative process lasts throughout one's life (Cf. C 84), it is undeniable that the vocational itinerary is marked by some *formative stages*.

answer less free. It influences on the three educational dynamisms. As for the *education*, it prepares for the effective knowledge of himself, acting that mechanism which permits to master the immaturities and/or to free from them. In the ambit of formation, it brings to unify one's life around the pillars of our identity and our belonging. In *accompanying*, it contributes to expand the area of effective freedom and to love one's vocation and to act according to the Guanellian identity.

⁶¹ *The soil itself makes the plants grow and bear fruit; first the tender stalk appears, then the head, and finally the head full of grain. When the grain is mature, the man starts cutting it with his sickle, because harvest time has come* (Mc 4, 28-29).

⁶² The periods of formation are not to be calculated only on the basis of age or studies or degrees obtained, but they have to be evaluated above all in reference to the human, spiritual and charismic maturity reached.

5. FORMATIVE STAGES

Stages of the formative itinerary

138. The distinction on stages must not make one to lose sight of the unity of the entire process; every stage proposes to favor the vocational maturation of the person with *particular emphasis*⁶³. In order to guarantee the specificity of each stage, our formative project defines *objectives, contents, central themes, means and formative dynamisms*, in harmony with the *Reference Models* and the converging plurality of the *human, spiritual and charismatic dimensions*.

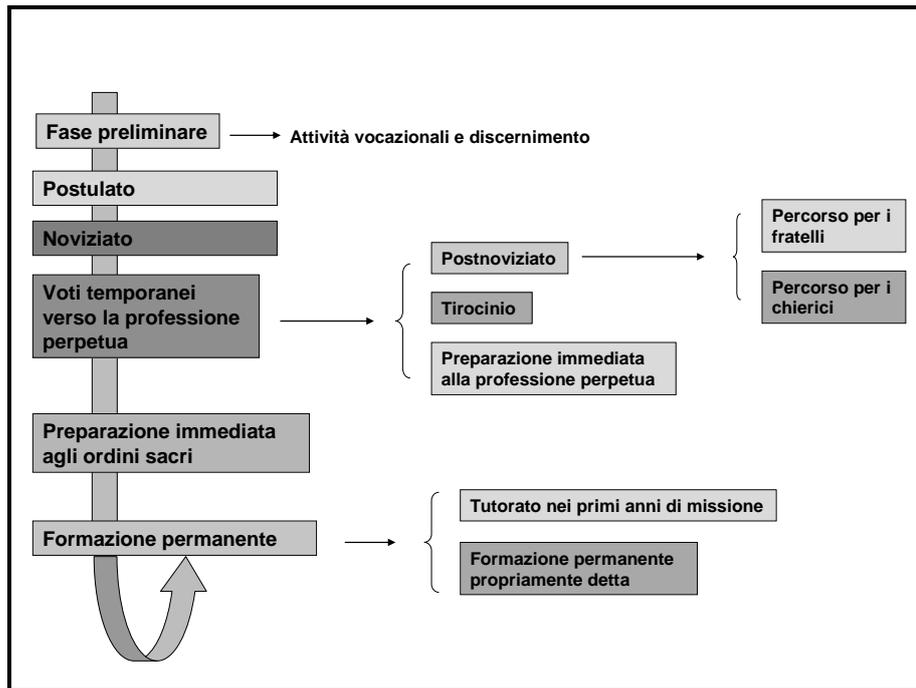
The stages which make up the formative itinerary are the following:

- *Preliminary stage: vocational activities and discernment*
- *Postulancy.*
- *Novitiate.*
- *Temporary vows towards the perpetual profession, in three phases:*
 - *Post Novitiate* - two itineraries: for the Brothers and for the clerics;
 - *Tirocinium* in the apostolate;
 - *Immediate preparation to perpetual profession.*
- *Immediate preparation to Holy Orders.*
- *Permanent formation in two phases:*
 - *Tutelage* in the first years of mission;
 - *Permanent formation - properly said.*

The stages listed are those officially approved by Magisterium and by our tradition. The admission to Postulancy foresees a period of *vocational activities and discernment*, as a preliminary stage.

The sequence of the stages leads us to recognize that the initial formation has its necessary pursuance in on-going formation.

⁶³ It would be *harmful* concede to the temptation of doing a bit of everything in every phase, with the risk of not doing the work seriously foreseen in each stage. It is appropriate to insist on the human and Christian maturity in the *preparation to Novitiate*, on deepening the spiritual experience in the *Novitiate stage*, insisting on the doctrinal preparation during the *years of temporary vows* and, for the *candidates to the Priesthood* and taking care of the priestly dimension during the theological studies.



THE FORMATIVE
ITINERARY OF THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

5.1 PRELIMINARY STAGE: VOCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND DISCERNMENT

Nature of the Preliminary stage to Postulancy:

139. The formative itinerary calls for a preliminary stage, which consists in *a period of vocational activities and discernment* (Cf. PdV 62) organized by the Provinces, vice-Provinces and Delegations, according to the plan of the present *Ratio Formationis*. We propose to help every person to welcome the life as vocation and to place himself in an attitude of *searching* and *discernment* of the divine will⁶⁴, even if he will not arrive necessarily at the choice of consecration.

A. Vocational search

140. Life is vocation, a call that comes from Above, from God who creates for love and, since he loves, calls⁶⁵; Life is a gift that is accomplished in a free response to a special call, to be discovered in the concrete circumstances of each day (Cf. PCS

⁶⁴ Every season of life has vocational connotation, therefore we cultivate a *vocational attention* towards every person especially if a youth, because of the future planning which characterizes his age.

⁶⁵ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, The Eucharist, source of every vocation and ministry in the Church. Message on the occasion of the 37th world day of prayer for the vocations, 14/5/2000, 3.

55)⁶⁶. This dialogue leads to develop an attitude of quest that disposes to welcome with courage the gift of the call⁶⁷.

B. Discernment

141. The discernment stage leads to make the *passage from search to the discovery* of one's vocation. It is an *exquisite formative moment* that allows the person to know and to perceive the right direction to give to one's life, to the extent of clarifying which of the three states of life (lay life, consecrated life, ordained ministry) to choose⁶⁸. The care for the vocational dimension *guides the person to interpret his existence in the light of God's plan* (PCS 55).

C. Proposal of Guanellian Consecration

142. It is possible that a person, listening to the Spirit, discover among the models of life *don Louis Guanella as lively and attracting person*. Then he begins to know him and to take him with sympathy as companion of the journey in faith, to the extent of desiring to follow his footsteps. Allowing growing the seeds of vocation probably deposited in his heart, he could begin to *discern the call to our consecrated life*. Therefore, the stage of *vocational possibility*, will be opened to him bringing him to ask "if" God calls him to the consecrated life in the charismatic Guanellian direction.

Formation Houses

143. The vocational search and the personalized discernment are normally carried out in suitable *formation Houses*, thanks to which the person has the possibility to meet God who calls and respond to him placing oneself at the *sequela* of Jesus Christ.

A. Family

144. The preliminary stage before the admission to Postulancy is lived in family. It becomes *echo of the voice of God* when the family relationships are lived in "vocational key": marriage, paternity, maternity, son ship, ecclesial sense and attention to the poor⁶⁹.

⁶⁶ With the gift of life, the person receives the invitation to realize one's being as response - historical, free and responsible – to the *Father* who calls to life, the *Son* who calls to the sequela and the *Spirit* which calls to holiness.

⁶⁷ The search, while raises up vocational questions, makes grow the awareness of being inserted fully in the *history of salvation* with a one's own vocation, that is gift, mystery and commitment.

⁶⁸ *Each member of the Institute* – joyful in the vocation and striving to rise up more collaborators for the Kingdom of God (Cf. C 86) – works hard for an *effective and personalized human and Christian formation of the youth*, arousing the necessary *existential questions*. They accompany the youth in this period of *search*, and to whom which manifest the desire to follow Christ in the vocation to consecrated life, they propose a more sufficient and adequate period of *residential discernment*.

⁶⁹ To mature in a vocation, there is a need for a family ambient that helps to take conscience of the call and to develop the potentialities in germ. In this regard, the description which don Luigi Guanella makes about his family in his memories is significant (Cf. L. GUANELLA, *The ways of (Divine) Providence*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 4, USA, 1993).

B. Parish community

145. The parish communities, especially those entrusted to our animation, constitute the *natural ambient for the announcement, the proposal and vocational accompanying*. Every boy, youth, adult has the opportunity to appreciate the vocations that edify the Church.

C. Our religious communities

146. The coherence of *life of each confrere* and the joyful witness of the Guanellian charism in the *common life* and in the *apostolic mission* turn to be efficacious means of animation and vocation ministry⁷⁰.

D. Youth ministry

147. Among the educational places, the *youth ministry* is essential in its various forms like human and cultural education, formation to the Christian life, catechesis, spiritual direction, sacramental life, voluntary service, civil service, annual formative proposals addressed to groups and youth movements...

Ordinarily the youth ministry finds its continuity and growth in the *animation* and in the *vocation ministry* properly said.

- The *oratories* reveal to be ambient of faith vocationally significant and point of reference to open oneself to God and to others.
- The *Movements of Guanellian inspiration* offer ideal ground of formation when they sensitize the value of the common and specific vocation and accompany the youth, with suitable formative itineraries, in the discernment of their plan of life and in the diffusion of the culture of charity.
- *School and University* have particular importance in the vocation animation. Our commitment contributes to the integral development of the students and *aims to promote the 'culture of vocations'* (PCS 56), raising the big questions and witnessing our charism.
- *Our Houses* through the charity activities contribute to increase the sensibility for the poverties that afflict the human society and become a place of vocational education⁷¹.

E. Family ministry

148. Since the basic foundation of every vocation is found in the family, it becomes an important educational ambient to be recognized, formed and sustained through an appropriate pastoral action.

⁷⁰ Our communities become *communities genatrix of vocations* when they witness the *service to the faith and charity* (Cf. C 86). Father Louis wrote: *The charity of the Institute, like a magnet, should attract vocations unceasingly because of its virtuous nature exemplified in the Servants of Charity by their affection and sacrifice* (L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 32).

⁷¹ The welcoming of the needy (Cf. Jn 5:7) grafts in the heart the consciousness that the poor is a value. Like the good Samaritan, the person could become joyful by taking the responsibility and evaluate the prospective of a dedication in the Guanellian consecrated life.

Particular educational places

149. There are places particularly suitable to carry ahead the search and the discernment, like the “vocation groups” and the “vocational Reception Houses in residential form” (Aspirancy).

- The *vocation group* is an ambient particularly suitable for the boys and the youth who have already completed a good journey of faith and who feel the necessity of a systematic guide for the verification and the vocational growth⁷².
- The *vocational reception Houses in residential form* or the *Minor Seminary* or the *Aspirancy house*, is an ambit all the more specifically adapt for accompanying of vocations⁷³.

Duration

150. The preliminary stage to Postulancy (Aspirancy) will last till *what is necessary* and then pass to the stage of vocational possibility to a first decision more solidly founded and begin to overcome eventual difficulties with regard to human and Christian growth. We should not allow ourselves to be taken by haste, if there are necessary pauses, clarifications, evaluation and study⁷⁴.

General Objective

151. The general objective of this stage is to facilitate the *vocational search*, a sufficient *discernment* and the specific *vocational choice*⁷⁵.

Intermediate objectives

152. To reach this decision, our action aims at *sketching the vocational identity* of the concerned persons and is ready to *identify the problems* that could hinder adequate vocational decisions⁷⁶.

⁷² The activity of this Group foresees the *daily prayer for all the vocations*, the *vocational sensitization of the ecclesial community*, *periodical welcoming of the youth* in the communities for initiatives of reflection and service.

⁷³ In general, the experience of the *vocational Reception Houses in residential form* (Aspirancy or *Minor Seminary*) takes place *in one of our Houses purposefully erected for that scope* which has its own characteristics and formative team.

It entails *two distinct forms*: that of *first reception and basic vocational discernment*, for those who desire to confront with the Word of God and who intend to live more radically their Christianity; that of *vocational accompanying to consecrated life*, directed to those who come to stay with us to know and to experience the values of Guanellian life.

⁷⁴ During this period the candidate will be given also the *opportunity to complete basic studies* or university studies already begun.

⁷⁵ Everyone has the right to receive the necessary help to choose and develop one's own specific vocation according to the Gospel. It could be vocation to *matrimony*, *committed celibacy*, *consecrated life* and *ordained ministry*.

A. In the Human dimension

153. As for the *Human dimension* every aspirant will be helped to overcome the forms of individualism and disorientation, awakening the *desire of fullness of life*⁷⁷. To facilitate a solid construction of the personality⁷⁸, they will be given sufficient reference models⁷⁹.

During this stage, the possession of a proportionate personal maturity is held as a preliminary condition, without which it would be illusory to begin a real formative process⁸⁰.

B. In the spiritual dimension

154. With regard to the *spiritual dimension*, efforts are made to make the aspirant to go close to the Lord Jesus with involvement and in a personal way, so that he could *live in Christ* (Cf. Phil 1:21) in the *sequela* and in the *imitation*⁸¹.

Following a person without imitating is an existential lie; Imitation without following is reduced to an impersonal moralism. Beginning from this duality, it is necessary to cultivate the principle *traits of Christian identity*: the experience of *Grace*, the *personal meeting with Christ*⁸², the *ecclesial living*, the *moral answer*, the *presence of Mary*...

⁷⁶ The vocational identity is a gift and a conquest. It is necessary that *the persons are educated to be able to choose*, that is, “decide to choose” what is more useful to the construction of “one’s self” according to the will of God.

⁷⁷ At times the more profound and authentic desires of the youth become dormant or mortified. Therefore, it is necessary to help him to understand, whom he wants to be.

⁷⁸ Those who intend to open themselves to the Lord’s call, must *live in fullness the power of their personalities* basing themselves, above all, on a stable *human-affective-sexual identity*; on the *relationship* with God and with others and on the *ability to take up apostolic activities and responsibility of study*. The above mentioned elements, according to the age, determine a healthy construction of personality.

⁷⁹ In substance the models are these : the *divine Persons of the Holy Trinity* in so far as the source of every call; the *Church*, genetrix and teacher of vocations; the *Founder*, with his charism and his holy life; the *Congregation*, called to raise up and educate its own vocations.

⁸⁰ It is possible to find *problematic situations* like: everlasting instability and incoherence of life; inability to understand and respect the sentiments and problems of others; excessive self-centeredness; difficulties to concentrate oneself, little capacity to control the impulses; unexpected change of moods; inability to integrate the positive and negative aspects of reality; difficulties to enter in the prospective of others; tendency to avoid the decisions and to defend oneself by insecurity and diversity; little availability to make an itinerary of growth; decadence of general interest (loss of interest, spiritual failing, easily irritated, carelessness in his own style of life, little interest for interpersonal relationships); elements of gratification (abuse of food, alcohol, smoking, means of communication...).

⁸¹ The *sequela* refers to an interpersonal relation of adhesion and falling in love, to the extent of saying: *For me, to live is Christ* (Phil 1:21). The *imitation* consists in a progressive assimilation of his thinking (Cf. 1Cor 2:16), feeling (Cf. Phil 2:5) and acting.

⁸² It deals with a real experience, lived in *faith*, in the *Church*, in *prayer*, in the sacramental *life* and in the practice of *brotherly love* (Cf. Jn 4:42).

These are the fundamental elements, unaffected by periods, culture and places, even though they concretize in different ways according to the variety of cultural contexts. The best synthesis of all these remains the expression of St. John: *This is his commandment: that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us* (1Jn. 3:23).

C. In the charismatic dimension

155. In merit of the *charismatic dimension*, our action requires that *unity be made between the human and the Christian* around the charism. The aspirant could find in it the *precious facets*, which will guide him to have the first experiences of the paternity of God, the divine son ship, the fraternity, the familiarity, the charity and the mission among the poor. From the knowledge of the Founder, some interest could be born towards the Guanellian identity, liking with regard to our religious family and its mission.

Formative Contents

156. In correspondence to the age and the objectives of this stage, *specific contents* will be proposed which allow a sufficient discernment and growth of the human, Christian and charismatic qualities (Cf. PdV 62)⁸³.

Means

157. The formative proposal makes use of the formative means already presented in the *Reference Models*, but with a quality satisfactory to the journey of one who is in search and discernment.

158. The hearing of the *Word* creates the space so that the aspirant discovers the truth about one's own being and the plan of life, which the Father entrusts to him. It is therefore, necessary to educate the boys and the youth so that they are faithful to *prayer* and the *meditation of the Word of God*: in silence and in listening they could perceive the call of the Lord to the religious life and to the Holy Orders and respond to it with generous readiness.

159. The *liturgical celebrations*, vocational events par excellence, offer privileged moments of experience of God and constitute a school of answering to Lord's call. Those who are in discernment will find above all in the Eucharist, the source and the nourishment of every priestly and religious vocation.

160. The personal and community *prayer* becomes an essential moment for the vocational discernment. The person places himself in relation with God from whom every vocation is born and experiences the benevolence and matures generous answers in daily life.

⁸³ The *themes* could concern about knowledge of self, perception of paternity of God, meaning of following and imitation of Christ the Lord, experience of Church, traditional means of Grace, study about the common and particular vocations and an initial knowledge of the Founder, the Institute and the consecrated life.

161. The aspirant is helped to assume *life as vocation* through the *dialogue with the educator* and to change it into project of life. Meanwhile, he consolidates his personality through the *verification of motivations* in everyday life and *reconciles himself* with his past. He begins to leave from general to that of specific choice of the *gift of oneself*, to keep open the *comparison among the different vocational choices* and *accept it*. Moreover, he is guided to verify his *suitability* for an eventual vocation of special consecration and, when he *chooses a specific formative itinerary*, he is sustained to *complete it with commitment*, respecting the conditions of an *effective accompanying*.

162. When the preliminary stage reaches the moment of residential vocational reception, the dialogue assumes the characteristics of *spiritual direction* and *personal dialogue of human growth*, and it could avail also the help of psychology and educational science.

The spiritual direction and the *personal dialogue of human growth offered by the formator* are held useful to help the integration of human, Christian and charismatic aspects in a global project of personal promotion.

163. The *education to the virtues of chastity, poverty and obedience*, predisposes to live as a free and responsible gift of oneself to others, it induces him to witness the primacy of being upon having and prepares to fully place him in the service of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God in a specific form of life.

164. The first approach with our communities, through the different vocational initiatives carried out, introduces to the *values of fraternal life*. In particular, one who looks at our common life has the possibility to see in it *a school in which all learn to love God, to love the brothers [...] with whom they live, and to love humanity, which is in great need of God's mercy and of fraternal solidarity* (FIC 25). Such a witness constitutes a great attraction towards religious life, because the community that prays and witnesses the charity proclaims the Gospel with the life.

165. The *study* and *work* also constitute indispensable moments of the preliminary stage for the entrance in Postulancy. They are means of knowledge and experience very much necessary to give foundation to the future spiritual and pastoral formation.

166. Our *apostolic activities* could result to be particularly significant for those who are in vocational search: the service of charity, in the ecclesial community, favors experiences of faith in the direction of listening, dialogue and answer to the personal call of God⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ The apostolate is among the privileged means to discern one's vocation, for, the *experience of service*, if *well prepared and guided*, becomes experience of great humanity and leads to know better oneself and other's dignity, as well as the beauty of dedicating oneself to the poor.

Formative Dynamisms

167. This preliminary stage demands that every vocational choice should mature through the *method of vocational proclamation*⁸⁵, *the proposal*⁸⁶ and *accompaniment*⁸⁷. Our actions tends to make the aspirant mature in the decision to reach the experience of Postulancy in the House erected for this purpose, or to take marriage life or committed celibacy.

Educational mediations

168. Every vocation, *like all the gifts which come from God, comes through many human mediations: that of parents or teachers, of pastors of the Church, of people who are directly engaged in a ministry of vocations' animation, or that of the simple believer*⁸⁸.

The human mediations have the task to help the person to recognize the gift received, giving priority to the mediation action of the *Grace*, which could give to the other agents of formation, clarity in interpretation and courage in decision.

- The mediation of the *parents* is practiced prevalently in the family, while that of the *educators* in other educational places.
- Every *Servant of Charity* and every *our community* place themselves at the service of the person in his dialogue with God.
- *The confrere in charge of the vocational accompaniment and discernment* in the “vocational reception community” helps the called to discover the signs of God in his own story and proposes to him a personalized formative itinerary.
- The mediation of the *Church* is of particular importance: it belongs to her to establish the Criteria of suitability for the admission to the following formative fases and the guiding principles for accompanying, the formation and the admission to the Holy Orders (Cf. OT 6).

Preliminary conditions for admission in Postulancy

169. To make the vocational decision in a responsible way, the candidate, first of all, has to recognize the *primacy of God*; he could be capable of *authentic freedom* and of an attitude of confident *abandonment to the work of the Grace*; and, finally, he have to be conscious of being *inserted in the Body of Christ that is the Church*.

⁸⁵ The whole of our pastoral action is animated by vocational dimension. We favor through the invitation “*Come and see*”, the meeting with our communities and knowing the language of charity.

⁸⁶ The moment of the proposal allows the person to think, how good, beautiful and true is a project of life, following Christ. There is a need to have the courage to *sow* extensively such proposal, so that everyone could read the signs of God on oneself and examine if he carries the gift of a specific vocation.

⁸⁷ Those who show a certain attraction to consecrated life or to the ordained ministry, they are accompanied in the discovery of their vocation in an atmosphere of great freedom and under the guidance of the Spirit. While a *personalized accompaniment* is necessary, a *group accompaniment* is also needed. Both of them are decisive and complementary moments for a mature vocational decision.

⁸⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Message of the Holy Father John Paul II in occasion of 37th World Day of prayer for the Vocations, 14/5/2000, 3.

If *there are no canonical impediments for the Novitiate* (Cf.: c 643; R 162), the person who requests to be admitted to Postulancy must have the age foreseen by canon 656. Moreover and have reached *sufficiently* the following objectives:

- *right intention* and *physical and psychological conditions* adequate to the age;
- *availability* for the formative process;
- a sufficient degree of *human maturity*, to build the Guanellian vocational option and carry on the formative itinerary;
- sufficient *sign* of divine call and the *inclination* to follow it;
- *option* for the Guanellian vocation⁸⁹ ;
- *knowledge* of the doctrine of faith and the nature of the consecrated life and the Institute;
- introduction to methods of *prayer*;
- *behavior* according to the Christian tradition.

Request for admission

170. While the *application for admission to residential discernment stage (Aspirancy)* has to be directed to the responsible of the vocational Reception (or Aspirancy) House, the *request for admission to Postulancy* should be sent, hand written, to the respective Superior (Cf. R 162).

At the conclusion of this stage, it belongs to the confrere in charge to evaluate whether it is fitting to admit the candidate to Postulancy. The admission *to Postulancy results in belonging to a specific province* (R 162).

Declaration

171. The request for the admission in the vocational reception community should be accompanied by a *hand written declaration*, in which the aspirant attests to begin the experience only for the vocational discernment and not for motive of work or volunteer work⁹⁰ .

⁸⁹ Don Guanella insisted on the necessity of grasping *clear signs of vocation*, right intention and sincere will (Cf. L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity* trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 32; 37).

⁹⁰ The aspirant could make use of the following form: *I declare: 1) that my entry in the vocational reception community of the Servants of Charity - Opera Don Guanella and what ever I do during this period do not have any characteristics of a work contract nor of voluntary work. My performance and my service in favor of the Institute are done freely and in view of the vocational discernment.*

5.2 POSTULANCY

Nature of Postulancy

172. The formative itinerary to Guanellian consecrated life begins exactly with the Postulancy⁹¹ and is carried out in a House of formation established for that purpose by the Province.

The Postulancy is the stage that closes the period of Aspirancy and prepares the entry in Novitiate (Cf. PI 43). It sets in motion a more close participation to the life of the Institute; it is a *time of formation to the full effect*⁹².

Right from the start, the candidate will be helped to make grow those seeds of vocation that the Spirit has planted in his heart. He *could reach the Guanellian option* of requesting the admission to Novitiate, or else *he could orientate his life differently*. The Postulancy, thus, closes the stage of vocational supposition and opens the option for the “yes”, in the availability to allow oneself to be formed by the Institute.

For his/her nature, the Postulancy demands a congruous time - normally not inferior to six months - during which the postulant is lifted by appointments of academic study, for a specific preparation to the Novitiate.

Place

173. The Postulancy is realized in a community held proper and approved by the provincial Superior and his council (R 164), normally out in the Novitiate House; it can coincide with the 'House of vocational Reception' (or of the Aspirancy).

Duration

174. The experience *begins* when the Institute accepts the formal written request made by the candidate (Cf. R 162.322) and *ends* when he expresses the decision to begin a first experience of life in our Institute for which the Institute itself considers him fit⁹³, or when he decides to leave.

In harmony with the legislation of the Church (Cf.: RC 4.11-12; c 597) and with our Regulations, the Postulancy has a *minimum duration* of six months and normally should not be prolonged beyond two years (Cf. R 166).

⁹¹ To refer to this formative stage various terms are being used: *Probation period*, *Postulancy period*, *Postulancy* (R 161), *Pre-Novitiate* or other terms. Our *Ratio* privileges the term *Postulancy*, as used by the Constitutions.

⁹² Father Louis Guanella emphasized this *need to make acquaintance with each other. It is equally a matter of highest interest for the Institute which takes the responsibility of admitting a new member, that the success of this new member is warranted. In fact, if this new member is good he will become an asset in the Institute. If he barely fits, he will be more troublesome than useful. If he is unsuitable, he might become harmful and even dangerous. Hence, the need to make acquaintance with each other ensues* (L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity* (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 37).

⁹³ This stage, *which can be prolonged without fear, should aim at verifying and clarifying certain points which will permit superiors to determine the advisability of and the time for the candidate's admission into the Novitiate. Care should be taken not to hasten the time for this admission, nor to defer it unduly, provided that it is possible to arrive at a certain judgment on whether the person is a promising candidate* (PI 43).

General objective

175. The general objective of the Postulancy is that of preparing the candidate to Novitiate. This requires that every candidate, *becoming aware of God's call*, [reaches] *that degree of human and spiritual maturity which will allow him to respond to this call with sufficient and proper responsibility and freedom* (RC 4)⁹⁴.

Intermediate objectives

176. In view of the general objective, the candidate has to reach sufficiently the *intermediate objectives*, pertaining to it.

A. In the Human dimension

177. Regarding the *Human dimension*, the Postulancy should bring to the maturity necessary to guarantee the continuation of formation. *A fair knowledge and acceptance of themselves, a progressive education to freedom and a sufficient intellectual, affective-sexual and volitive maturity and the attainment of that level of religious culture and catechetical knowledge indispensable for continuing the formative itinerary*⁹⁵ *are expected*.

It must keep in mind what establishes the n. 161 of our Rules, so that, before the Novitiate, at least the candidates to the Priesthood, and normally also the candidates to Brother, should have concluded the basic studies.³⁴

It could be necessary to complete the basic studies - at least for the Priesthood candidates to the (Cf. R 161)⁹⁶ -

B. In the Dimension spiritual

178. With regard to the *spiritual Dimension*, the Postulancy tends to begin the process of *personal conversion, the following and imitation of Christ*. It aims at rekindling the *awareness of the love of God and the certainty to be able to respond to Him* and solicits concrete *signs of growth in the moral virtues* as well as in *faith, charity and hope*.

C. In the charismatic Dimension

179. In merit of the *charismatic dimension*, the candidate is guided to discover the meaning, which the *charism of the Founder and of the Institute* has in relation to one's own *vocational identity*, belongingness and the *sense of the mission*, which he is called to carry out.

In fact, it is the Institute, which helps him to define and direct himself towards the specific vocational identity: that is, as religious Brother, permanent religious deacon,

⁹⁴ The grade of maturity must be suitable for undertaking Novitiate without it could be reduced to the level of a course of general formation based on a simple catechumenate (PI 43).

⁹⁵ In fact, it can actually happen that some present themselves as candidates who have not completed their Christian initiation (sacramental, doctrinal, and moral), and lack some of the elements of an ordinary Christian life (PI 43).

⁹⁶ The basic qualification for the candidates to the Priesthood should correspond to what is generally expected of young persons who have achieved the normal education of their country [which allows him to join the university courses]. It is particularly necessary that future novices attain a facility in the language used in the Novitiate (PI 43).

religious priest, associated cleric or laymen⁹⁷. At the same time, it ascertains the authenticity of the call and the free and responsible answer.

Formative contents

180. During the Postulancy stage, in proportion to the age and the objectives to be reached, contents regarding the human-affective, Christian and charismatic dimension will be proposed (Cf. RC 4)⁹⁸, through specific *themes*⁹⁹.

Means

181. The formative proposal avails of the *means* already presented, but with a sufficient gradation to the journey that one is making, as our Regulations defines (Cf. R 163)¹⁰⁰.

182. By *listening to the word of God*, the candidate will put himself into contact with Jesus, the Living Word, and will learn to see signs of his presence inside his own personal story, which is also the history of salvation.

183. The sacramental life will teach the candidate to make of the Eucharist – which is the life of the Church and the life of the Institute - the *privileged place for the meeting with the Lord* (SafC, 26). The postulant will make converge in it his aspirations, toils, projects, and practice of the virtues...

Equally, with the sacrament of *Reconciliation* he could experience the Father mercy and revive the bond of charity.

184. With *the personal and community prayer* he will be introduced into the contemplation and into the prayer of the Church, the origin of every true choice of life and Christian action.

⁹⁷ *The Institute can accept, in a temporary or permanent way, clerics or lay people, internal or external, as cooperators who share its apostolic work directly* (R 140; Cf. C 77.78). The formative itinerary of the associates is the responsibility of the Provinces.

⁹⁸ The candidate could be given the possibility to begin or complete the philosophical studies in preparation to the study of Theology or studies of other nature, kept account of what it is established by n. 172 of this Ratio.

⁹⁹ Some of the themes developed in the former stage are taken again with new emphasis and other themes that belong to this phase are also added. The themes could be the following: Knowledge of oneself, perception of God the Father and imitation of the Son, new life in the Spirit and in the Church, traditional means of Grace, nature of discernment, value of the common vocation and the “panorama” of the specific vocations, father Louis Guanella: model of Christian, consecrated and priestly life, philosophical and theological contributions, introduction to the theology of consecrated life and its mission in the Church, The Servants of Charity: spirit, charism, tradition, geography and mission.

¹⁰⁰ The objectives mentioned here are in harmony with our Regulations: *The structure of this phase must be such that it offers [...] to the candidate: a deeper knowledge of himself; spiritual direction; openness to the Word of God, to sacramental life and prayer; an experience of Guanellian community and apostolic life; a general knowledge of the Founder and the Congregation* (R 163).

185. *Through personalized guidance* he will be helped in the difficult process of self-knowledge and acceptance of his own weaknesses. In this delicate formative stage, the *Spiritual direction* will coincide with the action of accompaniment, that's why the formator will be also the spiritual director of the candidate.

186. The *formation to the virtues of the chastity, poverty and obedience*, will allow him to taste that gift of oneself in a stable, oblatory and total love typical of the consecration. At same time it will also allow him to realize that, *other ways* [all of them appreciable] *exist by which to give all of one's life to the Lord, besides that of entering a religious institute*(PI 43).

187. The *community life* will be an occasion to taste *how good and how wonderful it is that the brothers live as one* (Sal 133), gathered by the unique project of charity. It will be also a criterion of discernment for the eventual choice of Guanellian consecrated life.

188. The *study* constitutes a right instrument, not only for the intellectual formation, but also to that of affective and will formation. It is a means of asceticism and faithfulness to the commitment. Moreover, it could infuse enthusiasm of following the reading of spiritual authors and selected biographies of the saints¹⁰¹.

189. Through the *apostolic activities* of the Congregation, the candidate will begin to live the mission in the spirit and style of the Institute and will realize the poverty that is around him.

190. The *manual work* will help him to mature in the spirit of collaboration in the running of the House. Like the study, the work also has its own ascetic value and favors the belonging to the Institute.

191. With the *time for relaxation, sport, creative expression*, the candidate will learn to establish a correct relationship with his own body, to reveal the sentiments of his soul, to create bonds of friendship, to keep sadness away and make the daily rhythm more serene.

192. Being helped to draw a *personal Plan of life*, he will begin to put his vocation into a condition of dynamic discernment; he will learn to live progressively the values.

Formative dynamism

193. This stage requires a relationship qualified *by competence and benevolence* so that the Postulancy becomes not only a time of waiting for the Novitiate, without facing the vocational difficulties, handed on, thus, to successive stages. The formative methodology adapts the *Laboratory of faith*, as formula of search and confront *in*

¹⁰¹ Special importance should be given to the *life of father Louis Guanella*; the candidate could meditate his own vocational history and begin to follow his footsteps.

*which each person, in dialogue with God, can grow in the knowledge of his faith and become a convincing witness to Christ*¹⁰².

Educational mediations

194. Among all the meditations the *Grace of the Lord* is the main agent of formation. But the Lord uses also other meditations. Among these the *formative community* assumes a particular importance, in which the *formator* is an experienced confrere who, without depriving the community of its responsibility, follows the candidates personally and helps them to achieve the maturity required for the decisions to be taken (Cf. R 165)¹⁰³. Since it is *prudence to proceed by steps*¹⁰⁴, such a community will promote an experience proportionate to the real existential situation of the candidate, his maturity of faith and his psychological consistency.

Criteria for the admission to Novitiate

195. The following criteria for the admission to Novitiate are indicated by the Universal Law, in the canons 641-645, and by our Regulations:

- *canonical age, sufficient health, suitable character* (Cf. R 169)¹⁰⁵;
- *sufficient human-affective maturity*¹⁰⁶;
- *free and deliberate decision* (C 89);
- *immunity from the impediments foreseen by canon 643*¹⁰⁷;
- *conditions expressed by the Universal Law and that of the Institute about candidates already clerics or religious* (Cf. R 170)¹⁰⁸;

¹⁰² GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Angelus of the 27/8/2000*.

¹⁰³ It can happen that the formator has the competence to bring forth the psychological consultation; in that case, as a true act of love, he will help the candidate also in the painful introspective knowledge of himself.

¹⁰⁴ (L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 37).

¹⁰⁵ Our Regulations, according to the canon 642, foresee that the health, character and maturity can be tested *by experts when appropriate*, making sure that every person's right is protected and his good reputation and privacy are not damaged. (Cf. c 220).

¹⁰⁶ That is, *balanced emotional development, including a sexual growth proportionate to age; ability to involve himself in the community life and to fulfill its obligations* (R 169). During Postulancy there is a need, therefore, to have resolved the problems of human maturity which could deviate the candidate from his choice and disturb the typical experience of the Novitiate (Cf. PI 43).

¹⁰⁷ According to canon 643, the candidate *to be validly admitted to Novitiate* should have completed the seventeenth year of age; should not be married, while the marriage lasts; should not be bound a sacred bond to some Institute of consecrated life or incorporated in some Society of apostolic life, without prejudice to canon 684. Furthermore he cannot enter the institute led by force, fear or deceit, nor can a superior accept him under the same influences. Finally he cannot conceal the fact of having already been incorporated into an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life.

¹⁰⁸ *Superiors are not to admit secular clerics to the Novitiate without consulting their proper Ordinary; or those who have debts which they are unable to meet* (c 644).

- *formative availability (docibilitas)*¹⁰⁹ ;
- *Christian experience personally absorbed* (R 169);
- *attitude toward community life and Guanellian mission*;
- *sufficient certainty to be called to Guanellian religious life*;
- *certificates and documents*¹¹⁰ *required from the CanonLaw.*

Request for admission to Novitiate

196. The *request for admission to Novitiate* should be sent to the Provincial Superior and his Council and must be handwritten by candidate¹¹¹. This request will be accompanied by a report, which the formator will attach to it regarding the suitability of the candidate. (Cf. R 167).

5.3 NOVITIATE

Nature of the Novitiate

197. The Novitiate is a decisive phase for the vocational growth of the candidate (Cf. R 168). It marks *the beginning of religious life and offers our candidates the possibility of learning more about their vocation and the vocation of the Institute, of experiencing its life style and of forming their minds and hearts according to its spirit* (C 88).

198. It is an experience of faith modeled on that of the apostles invited by Jesus to stay with him before they were sent to preach and is a true and proper *initiation to the Guanellian consecrated life*.

199. With the Novitiate, the Institute has the possibility to evaluate the intention and the aptitude of the novices which share its spiritual heritage (Cf. C 88).

Place

200. The Novitiate, to be valid, must be made in a *House regularly established* for that purpose by the Superior General with the consent of his Council (Cf.: c 647, R

¹⁰⁹ Father Louis said the postulants must *show themselves spontaneous in conversations and actions, so that they may appear as an open book, which everyone can read clearly and understand the contents* (L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 38).

¹¹⁰ According to canon 645 the candidates, before being admitted to the Novitiate, they must produce *proof of baptism and confirmation and of their free status*. In cases of the admission of clerics, or persons who had been admitted to another institute of consecrated life, to a society of apostolic life, to a mayor seminary, then, the testimony respectively of the local Ordinary, or the major Superior of the Institute or Society, or the rector of the seminary is requested. The same canon foresees the possibility that other documents could be requested which attest the suitability and immunity from impediments; Furthermore, it gives the faculty to the Superiors to ask other informations, even under secrecy.

¹¹¹ The canon 641 affirms that *the right to admit candidates to the Novitiate belongs to the mayor Superiors*. The canon 642 attests that it will be there care to admit only those who, besides being of required age, *are healthy, have a suitable disposition and have sufficient maturity to undertake the life which is proper to the Institute*.

173)¹¹². Normally the House is situated in a context, in accord with the culture and the language of the novice.

Duration

201. The duration of this formative stage must be *twelve months*, spent in the community of the Novitiate itself (Cf.: c 648,1; R 174)¹¹³. It is *the faculty of the legitimate Superior*, after hearing the Novitiate community and with the consent of his Council, extend the trial of the Novitiate, but not more than six months, with due regard for number 174 of our *Regulations* (Cf. R 187.327,4).

Reception

202. A *congruous time of spiritual exercises* at the beginning of Novitiate is envisaged.

203. The entrance is celebrated with a simple and significant *welcoming rite* to show the originality of the experience that the candidate is assuming and the desire to put himself under the guide of the master.

General objective

204. The purpose of the Novitiate *is to give the novices a greater understanding of their divine vocation, and of their vocation to that institute. During the Novitiate the novices are to experience the manner of life of the Institute, and form their minds and hearts in its spirit. At the same time their resolution and suitability are to be tested* (c 646).

Intermediate Objectives

205. In order to realize sufficiently the general objective, the candidate should pursue adequate *intermediate objectives*.

A. In the human dimension

206. In *Human dimension*, continuing the path of *self-knowledge and acceptance* of oneself, the novice is guided to live the *detachment from the world* and the necessary *conversion* of thoughts, feelings and actions, which is the foundation of the spiritual experience of this stage.

¹¹² In *particular cases*, and by way of exception, with the permission of the Superior General given with the consent of his council, a candidate can make the Novitiate in another House of the Institute, under the direction of a suitable confrere, functioning as director of novices (c 647, 2). The legitimate Superior can allow a group of novices to reside, for a certain period of time, in another House designated by himself (c 647, 3).

¹¹³ The period of the Novitiate should not *extend beyond two years*, also when, to integrate the formation of the novices, one or more periods of apostolic experiences are to be taken up (Cf.: c 648, 3; R 174.185-186). The *Regulations* number 175 affirms that, with due regard to Regulation n. 173, an absence from the Novitiate house which lasts more than three months, either continuous or interrupted renders the Novitiate invalid. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made up (Cf. c 649, 1); if it is inferior, the Superior has the right to decide whether or not it should be made up (Cf. R 322, 7). Leaving the Novitiate upon the decision of the legitimate superior or the abandonment by the will of the novice, interrupts the Novitiate.

B. In the spiritual dimension

207. As for the *spiritual dimension*, the canon 652§2 requires that the novices are
- led to develop the *human and Christian virtues*;
 - introduced to *a fuller way of perfection*, through prayer and self denial;
 - instructed in *contemplating the mystery of salvation* and in *reading and meditating on the sacred Scriptures*;
 - prepared to offer their *worship to God in the sacred liturgy*;
 - formed about the *exigencies of consecrated life* to God in Christ, through the practice of the evangelical counsels.

C. In the charismatic dimension

208. The objectives of the *charismatic dimension* consist in modeling the *Guanellian identity* and a *more decisive sense of belonging*.
The novices, therefore, *learn about the character and the spirit, its purpose and discipline, its history and life, and imbued with love for the Church and its sacred Pastors* (c 652§2), assimilate the *charism* and the *spirit* of the Institute.

Formative contents

209. The stage of the Novitiate, since it has to qualify the further development of the vocational journey, it is made up of *essential and founding contents*¹¹⁴.

Formative means

210. The Means to advance in the formative journey are substantially the same of the other stages. Instead, the way we use them is qualitatively different. It is like climbing a spiral staircase (= the Means), but in which, one finds on a higher level (= modality).

211. The *Word of God* heard and prayed both personally and in community will become for the novice his daily nourishment. The practice of the *Lectio divina* and the *meditation* of the divine mysteries, as well as the study of the *great authors of the spiritual tradition of the Church* assume particular importance.

212. The *Liturgy*, which finds in the Eucharist its summit, will be celebrated and lived *according to the spirit and the characteristics of the Institute* (PI 47). The novice, thus, will learn to offer himself to God and the poor.

213. The *personal prayer* will become an indispensable dialogue with the Father and the Son, a speaking *heart to heart*¹¹⁵. The novice will experience the community prayer as everlasting praise of Christ and of the Church.

¹¹⁴ The novice will have the possibility to go deep into some *themes*, that is, about the primacy of God, the Church and her evangelizing mission, Virgin Mary, religious life, the Spirit and the charism of the Founder, the Congregation (the history, today, the future prospective), inculturation, our Rule of life, evangelical counsels, fraternal life in community and the mission of the Servants of Charity.

214. The *Spiritual direction* will be the means through which the novice, as open book¹¹⁶, will allow himself to be read and guided by the master. It is the exclusive task of the novice master *for each and every one of the novices*¹¹⁷.

215. *The initiation to vows* will lead the novice to the triple expression of the religious consecration: *chaste* to offer all his being to God; *poor* to entrust in the Providence of God and *obedient* to *do* the will of the Father.

216. Through *fraternal life in community* he will try to assimilate the primacy of the charity and live the exigencies of the consecration.

217. With the *personal study* he will have the possibility to increase the knowledge and the imitation of Christ, to meditate our Rule and evaluate his suitability for the Guanellian vocation. At the same time, through a serious biblical and liturgical formation, he will be guided to understand and make his own the spiritual patrimony of the Institute (Cf. C 92).

218. With the *apostolic activities*, under the guidance of the novice master, he could strengthen the motive of his donation to God and to the poor and realize, little by little, in his life the conditions of that cohesive unity between contemplation and apostolic activity that are closely linked (PI 47).

219. Through *work* he collaborates with the Providence of God, develops his own expressiveness and creativity, trains himself for sacrifice, is disposed to the socialization and learns to make even work become prayer.

220. The *time for personal relaxation becomes* a good formation ground for life as well as an opportunity to relate with others. The same can be said for *physical exercise*, for the discipline it requires and for the observance of the rules and regulations of the game.

221. Through the *personal project of life*, the novice will be introduced to the intimacy with Jesus Christ, to the healthy relationship of fraternity and friendship in community and to the periodical evaluation with the master about the evolution of his own formative journey.

¹¹⁵ (L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 42).

¹¹⁶ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *1899 Regulations of Sons of Sacred Heart*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 1, USA, 1991, 230)

¹¹⁷ *The director and assistant director of novices, [...] are not to bear the sacramental confessions of the novices, unless in individual instances the students of their own accord require it*(c 985).

222. With the *community project* all the novices follow a *community program, which schedules time for prayer, work and fraternal recreation always allowing the necessary flexibility in different situations. They should determine what might be beneficial for their interior renewal and charitable apostolate* (C 26). It has to consider also *more general projects*, like that of the Congregation and the Church.

Formative dynamisms

223. In general not all the novices enter the Novitiate at the same level of human and Christian culture. Therefore, care should be taken to adapt the formative pedagogy according to each person (Cf. PI 51). For those who aspire to be lay Brothers and those who prepare themselves to be religious in ordained ministry the same charismatic formation is given (Cf. PI 102).

224. Every novice will be educated to a *faith of every day* and to the availability to serve God, as Mary (Cf. Lk 1:38). The reference to Mary will follow the entire formative dynamism by the practice of the so-called *biblical-Marian method*¹¹⁸.

Educational mediations

225. Even during this stage it is *God who does*¹¹⁹. He is the principal agent of formation but who continues to make use of other mediations.

- Among these the *novice* is the first responsible for his personal collaboration with formative work (Cf. C 92). He commits himself to respond faithfully to the grace of the divine vocation (c 652,4).
- The *novice master* has the responsibility and the direction of the Novitiate (Cf.: c 650,2; C 91). It belongs to him to transform the formative proposal into concrete Guanellian religious life (Cf. R 181)¹²⁰.
- *Collaborators with the master of novices* are those *confreres* who assist him in following the formation of the novices closely. They remain under the direction of the master in whatever regards the organization of the Novitiate and the formation program (R 182).
- The *religious community* also constitutes another important educational mediation. Such a community, through the personal and community witness, will help the novice to follow fruitfully the formative itinerary (Cf. R 179).

¹¹⁸ The novice will be offered a particular way of living in relation not only with the Word of God in general, but in particular with the daily Word of God. It is the *Word awaited, received and known* in the meditation; it is *desired, kept in heart and conserved* as a treasure, as Virgin Mary did (Cf. Lc 2,19.51). A Word in which the novice learns to *remain so that it is fulfilled in life*.

¹¹⁹ Cf. L. GUANELLA, *The ways of (Divine) Providence*, (trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 4, USA, 1993).

¹²⁰ To fulfill this duty he *could make use of* not only the formative community, but also of *the help of experts* in theological and spiritual disciplines, as well in that of psychology and professional sciences.

Criteria of admission to first profession

226. In order to be admitted to first profession, the candidate is requested to fulfill the *requirements foreseen by the Laws of the Church and our Institute*. In particular, it is necessary that

- the candidate has completed *at least the 18 year of age* (c 656);
- that the Novitiate has been made *validly* (c 656);
- could be reached sufficiently the *formative objectives*¹²¹ for the *necessary interior freedom in following Christ*¹²²;
- and he shows signs *that he will be admitted to the final vows* (Cf. R187).

The request for admission

227. The request for admission to the religious profession should be sent to the legitimate Superior. It will be accompanied by an evaluation prepared by the novice master with regard to the aptitude of the candidate to the profession (Cf. R 187).

If deemed suitable, the candidate is admitted to temporary profession. The legitimate Superior, with the consent of his Council grants the admission freely (Cf. c 656)¹²³. During the course of a liturgical celebration, the Church, through the competent superiors, receives the vows of those who make their profession, and associates their offering with the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Rite of first profession

228. The *rite of first profession* takes place in the Eucharistic celebration. During the celebration, the Church, through the competent superiors, receives the vows of those who make their profession, and associates their offering with the Eucharistic sacrifice¹²⁴. *Beginning from the mystery celebrated in this way, it will be possible to develop a more vital and profound appreciation of consecration* (PI 54)¹²⁵, which even though

¹²¹ *At human level*, the novice should have reached a good knowledge and acceptance of oneself; should have shown 'docibilitas' to the formative action, a capacity for inter-personal relations and a psycho-affective equilibrium. *On a Christian level*, should have demonstrated an appropriate life experience of following and imitating Christ. *On charismatic level*, should have reached a sufficient vocational motivation, a proportionate capacity to assume responsibly the commitments arising from the vows, a consonance with the charism and the mission of our Institute, a clear orientation towards the Guanellian identity.

¹²² When there is interior freedom, the person is freely attached to God by a voluntary service, a loving servitude (Cf. PI 55). Instead, when a freedom *not free* continues, especially in the ambit of personality with particular importance for a normal continuing of formation, then it is better to *interrupt the formation rapport*.

¹²³ The competent Superior has the faculty to permit an eventual anticipation of first profession, but not by more than 15 days (Cf.: c 649,2; R 188).

¹²⁴ The Church receives also the profession *in articulo mortis*, according to what is established by our *Regulations* (Cf. R 189).

¹²⁵ The *rite of profession* foresees the *Gift of Constitutions and the Crucifix* as signs of Guanellian consecration. The formula is specified in the number 94 of the *Constitutions*. In the deed of profession, that is to be recorded, the date and place of the act itself and the general information

temporary, declares already the total gift of oneself to God, because *one does not give one's life on a "trial" basis* (PI 55).

The profession should be explicit and made *without force, fear or deceit* (c 656) and freely received by the major Superior, personally or by his delegate (Cf. R 188).

Juridical and formative effects

229. With the profession, the novice gives himself to God in the witness of a chaste, poor and obedient life, in fraternal communion of life, according to the Constitutions of the Servants of Charity (Cf. C 94). Our religious family welcomes him as its member.

The newly professed is *assigned to the Province* in which he was admitted as a postulant and it will allow him *to continue formative itinerary*. From that day, he will dress with the *habit* of the Congregation as a sign of consecration and belonging.

on the candidate will be mentioned and the candidate, the confrere who has received the profession and two witnesses will sign it (Cf. R 190).

5.4 TEMPORARY VOWS TO THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

Nature

230. The period that goes from the end of the Novitiate to the perpetual vows and to the Holy Orders leads to consolidate *the formation began in the Novitiate* (C 96). There is a need to gather the fruits of the previous stages and *consolidate the vocational identity* (Cf. c 659).

The professed, *a living stone in the structure of the Institute* (C 95), will be guided towards that state of life that he has chosen (Brother or deacon or Guanellian priest).

Place

231. The professed Brothers *must continue their formation in formative communities for at least two years* (R 193)¹²⁶.

The candidates to the holy Orders will be received in the formative community of the *House of formation or in the Scholasticate*, if they have to complete the philosophical studies; or would reside in *theological seminary*, if they have to frequent the theological studies.

Duration

232. The *total duration* of this period of temporary vows *must not be less than three years nor longer than six* (Cf. R 192). *During the first triennium the profession must be renewed annually. In the second triennium it may be made for three years. In particular cases, the superior Provincial with the consent of his council has the faculty to extend this period but not to exceed nine years* (R 192)¹²⁷.

At the expiration of the period for which the profession was made, it is necessary that the religious freely request to renew his vows (Cf. c 657).

Stages

233. The period of temporary vows *includes three stages* (Cf. R 191):

- *the immediate post-Novitiate* with the specific formation;
- *the Tirocinium*;
- *the immediate preparation to the perpetual profession.*

This itinerary has a normative value. However, for reasons considered valid by the General council, the individual Provinces are given faculty to re-arrange the succession of the first two stages, regarding the philosophical studies and the Tirocinium (cf R 191).

Such possibilities apply only to the philosophical studies and the Tirocinium.

¹²⁶ *If necessary, the Superior General with the consent of his council may allow that candidates in formation be integrated in communities with apostolic work* (R 193).

¹²⁷ The time reserved for the specific preparation of the candidates to the Priesthood must be at least four years of theological studies (Cf.: c 250, R 208).

A. Immediate post-Novitiate and specific formation

234. The stage of the immediate post-Novitiate *is to be considered as an extension of formation of Novitiate* (R 194). It should be translated, therefore, *into living concretely the values of the Guanellian apostolic religious life and in practicing the Constitution, by deepening its impact in everyday life* (R 194). *The stage of the specific formation of the candidates to Priesthood and of the Brothers* is inserted here (Cf. R 203).

- For the religious inclined ordained ministry it includes the years of the *Declaration of Intention*, ministries of Lector and Acolyte¹²⁸.
- For the religious Brother, the specific formation foresees a biblical, theological, charismatic, educational and professional preparation (Cf. R 193), and the possibility of receiving the ministries of *Lector* and *Acolyte*¹²⁹.

B. Tirocinium

235. For every confrere in formation *the Tirocinium is [...] a vital and intense confrontation with a Guanellian experience, educational and social services settings. This allows him to come into contact with our mission more directly, to verify his attitudes and interests and to continue that synthesis between action and contemplation which is characteristic of our spirituality* (R 199).

For all the candidates to the perpetual profession, *the stage of the Tirocinium is mandatory* and has ordinarily the *duration of one year* (Cf. R 200)¹³⁰. It inserts those who do Tirocinium in our communities, where - under the *supervision of a more experienced confrere* (R 202) – they can complete typically Guanellian activities¹³¹.

C. Preparation to the perpetual profession

236. After the Tirocinium, either the candidates prepare themselves to the perpetual profession and to the Holy Orders or continue their studies, according to the guidelines of the major superiors, in harmony with the *Provincial or Delegation Directory*.

¹²⁸ The Canon law affirms: *The formation of the members who are being prepared for sacred Orders is governed by the universal law and the Institute's own program of studies* (c 659, 3). Moreover, to admit the candidate to the Diaconate, whether permanent or transitory, it is necessary that he has received the ministries of Lector and of Acolyte (Cf. c 1035, 1).

¹²⁹ It deals with the ministries conferred not in view of the Priesthood, but similar to what the canon 230 foresees: *Lay men, whose age and talents meet the requirements prescribed by decree of the Episcopal Conference, can be given the stable ministry of Lector and of Acolyte through the prescribed liturgical rite*.

¹³⁰ *In particular cases, the provincial Superior with his Council can dispense individual singularly* (R 200). According to the exigencies of the individual provinces, the Tirocinium could be extended another two years; in this case, the professed could continue or begin the activity of studies in one of the two years of this experience.

¹³¹ Such activity is understood as an active and fraternal presence in the midst of our residents, where the candidates may be given a true responsibility (Cf. R 202). For this reason the confrere doing *Tirocinium* will be *free from the commitment of scholastic study*, in order to allow him to live the experience fully.

For all the candidates, in preparation to the perpetual profession, our Institute foresees a more intense and sufficiently long period (Cf. PI 64), *but not shorter than two months* (R 221), *almost like a second Novitiate to be spent in reflection and prayer* (C 98).

General objective

237. The formative stage of temporary vows, according to the various phases, *aims at completing the process of maturation in view of the perpetual profession and at caring for the specific formation of the Guanellian priest or Brother* (R 191). In this period the confrere will strive decisively to become a man of God, assimilating always more fully the charism of the Institute in the integration of faith, culture and service, in order to enable himself to assume the Guanellian mission in the Church.

Intermediate objectives

238. During the *stage of the immediate post-Novitiate and the specific formation*, in accord with the number 195 of *Regulations*, the intermediate objectives aim at a greater integral growth of the consecrated person.

- In the *human dimension*, the aim is to reach a stable equilibrium between discipline, freedom and responsibility, above all in the commitments of community life, study and apostolate.
- In the *spiritual dimension*, we tend to make unity of life between prayer, service and culture. The philosophical and theological, technical and professional disciplines will help to develop the dynamisms of one's own consecration, by showing the *harmony, which exists between the knowledge of reason and that of faith* (PI 61).
- In the *charismatic dimension*, it is proposed to consolidate the Guanellian vocation, by making perceive the beauty and the apostolic validity and continuing the cultural understanding.

239. The *stage of the Tirocinium* has the following intermediate objectives.

- In the *human dimension*, the candidate will be helped to verify his personal consistency in the vital confrontation with the educational-pastoral community in which he is inserted, and in the experience of work among the poor and of collaboration with the laity.
- In the *spiritual dimension*, the synthesis of contemplation and action will be continued. At the school of Jesus, in the light of the preventive method, he will learn *to do every thing for the glory of God and for the salvation of the world* (C 30).
- In the *charismatic dimension*, he will measure the attitudes, gifts and personal inclinations in the active participation to the Guanellian life.

240. During the *immediate preparation to the perpetual profession*, the intermediate objectives intend to *permit the candidates to the perpetual vows to have adequate preparation and make a mature decision before the great step, which they are above to take* (R 220) definitively.

- In the *human dimension*, it will be necessary to verify and make perfect the structure of personality with equilibrium, stability, healthy relationships and responsible apostolic-charitable commitment.
- In the *spiritual dimension*, the professed will mature a definitive and confident option for the *sequela Christi* in the consecrated life, as a necessary answer to the love of the Father. He will renew the commitment of conversion and of sanctity, and will consolidate his own spiritual life, also from the pastoral activities.
- In the *charismatic dimension*, having as supreme rule of life the following of Christ as proposed by the Gospel and as expressed in the Constitutions (c 662), he will strengthen the sense of identity and the religious belongingness. He will prepare himself to face the mission and answer to the challenges of our time, in order to be a credible presence of the charity of Christ among men (Cf. SafC 5-12.36-46).

Formative Contents

241. For a progressive faithfulness to the form of life chosen, every stage foresees some specific contents. In the various vocational choices (clerics and Brothers) and in the different phases of the formative itinerary, suitable themes¹³² will be presented, according to the richness of *lex credendi*, *lex orandi* and *lex vivendi*.

A. For The aspirants to the Holy Orders

242. The contents proposed for the aspirants for ordained ministry will help them to *internalize as a whole the project of priestly life [or Diaconate] proposed by the Church and the values which are proper of our vocation, which should characterize the ministry of the future priest* (R 205).

The contents will be adequate to the formative period which the candidate is living and will demand the involvement not only of the intellectual, but also that of affective and volitive dimension. Therefore, they will have for the existential value both the *philosophical-theological studies* foreseen by the Church¹³³, and our *systematic catechesis* according to the following disposition.

¹³² The *themes* will continue to concern about the primacy of God, the Church and her evangelizing mission, Virgin Mary, religious life, the spirit and the charism of the Founder, the situation of the poor, inculturation, our Rule of life, evangelical counsels, fraternal life in community and the mission of the Servants of Charity.

¹³³ In particular, the theology moves in two directions. *The first is that of the study of the Word of God: the word set down in holy writings, celebrated and lived in the living tradition of the Church, and authoritatively interpreted by the Church's Magisterium. Hence the importance of studying sacred Scripture "which should be the soul, as it were, of all theological, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, the history of the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium. The second direction is that of the human person, who converses with God: the person who is called "to believe," "to live," "to communicate" to others the Christian faith and outlook. Hence the study of dogmatic and moral theology, of spiritual theology, of canon law and of pastoral theology* (PdV 54).

- If the professed is *in the stage of philosophical studies*, he will be offered themes in relation to sapiential knowledge, love for one's own vocation and personal fidelity.
- In the *year of the Declaration of intention*, the themes proposed would help him to clarify and declare the will to assume the ministry in the Church and in the Congregation, which, in its time, will be conferred to him through the sacrament of Ordination¹³⁴.
- During the *year of Lector ministry*, the formative contents would privilege the Sacred Scripture and the systematic catechesis on the ministry of the Lector. It will prepare him for the meditation of the Mystery of the God's love, and the proclamation of his Word, so that it grows and brings fruits in the heart of men.
- In the *year of Acolyte ministry*, the themes proposed will prepare the candidate to receive the Acolyte ministry, orientating him to understand the Eucharistic mystery and the service at the altar of the Lord and in the Church. Such catechesis will encourage him to progress continually in faith and in the liturgical and charitable commitment.
- During the period of *Tirocinium*, the confrere will receive thematic proposals in relation to the necessary harmonization between consecration and apostolate. The contents particularly deal with the educational pastoral charity, lived by the Founder and codified in the *Basic Document for Guanellian Mission*: charity of person and animation of the service.
- In the *immediate preparation to the perpetual profession*, the themes are concerned about the existential reading again of our Constitutions and the systematic catechesis on the spiritual, ecclesial and juridical meaning of the perpetual profession. At the same time, specific contents are also offered with regard to the order of Diaconate.

B. For the Brothers

243. For the Brothers, in reference to their original identity of consecrated laity, contents of cultural, biblical-theological, charismatic character and, above all, of professional nature will be proposed. If required, sufficient catechesis will be given in preparation to the ministries of the Lector and of the Acolyte. More specifically, the content program foresees the following disposition.

- In the *first years of temporary vows*, the formative contents are concerned about the values of their Christian laicity marked by the Guanellian religious consecration (Cf. R 217), the nature of commitment that flows from the sacrament of baptism and its actualization in the active charity. In particular, themes will be offered concerning the growth in the love for the consecrated

¹³⁴ This rite is not held obligatory to aspirants to the Holy Orders in a clerical Institute through the vows (Cf. c 1034, 2). Yet, our Regulations require that *the confrere should make in writing his "Declaration of Intention" before being admitted to the theological courses* (R 207). It is now by now a tradition that such Declaration is accompanied also by *a simple liturgy*, in which the aspirant to the Holy Orders expresses publicly his intention and his availability to welcome with an open soul, the formation action of the Church, through the mediation of the formators.

lay vocation and the integration of the proclamation, celebration and Guanellian life.

- During the *Tirocinium*, the themes will focus on how to make the vital synthesis between the apostolic activities and the exigencies of consecration. Special importance will be given to the dynamisms both of personal charity witness and animation, and to the educational professional prospective expressed in the *Basic Document for Guanellian Mission*.
- In the *immediate preparation to the perpetual profession* the formative program helps to deepen the study of our Rule of life and offer a systematic reflection on the spiritual, ecclesial and juridical meaning of the perpetual profession.

Formative means

244. As already in the previous stages, we would rely on that complex of means suggested by the tradition of the Church and by our religious family, by the modern human sciences and by the socio-cultural context. The degree and the ways of employing them will be qualitatively and proportionally different also in this stage.

245. The *Word of God* will become the food of the soul, the living word which calls, orients and moulds the existence (RdC 24): it is there that God reveals himself, educates the heart and the mind; it is there that the vision of faith is matured, learning to look at reality and at events with the same eyes of God, to the point of having "*the thought of Christ*" (1 Cor 2:16).

246. The *Liturgy* will educate him to imitate the praying Christ; and in the liturgical celebrations will lead him to give voice to the praying Church, which celebrates the saving mysteries of Christ. In the Eucharist and in the *Reconciliation*, participating in the Easter mystery of Christ, the confrere will intensify the Communion with God and will learn to make a total gift of himself to others and become "bread broken" for the life of the world.

247. The *personal and community prayer* will help him to take care of the primacy of the spiritual life; and so it is a "duty of the candidate" to search for God, as a "right of the poor" who seek in him the man of God, the mediator, the faithful and prudent friend, the safe guide, the servant of Charity.

248. The *Spiritual direction* will lead him to discern the action of God, will accompany him in the ways of the Lord and will sustain in the fervor of and in the practice of virtues.

249. The *formative dialogue* with the responsible of formation will help to make the synthesis among the many stimulus that come from the inter-personal relations, the apostolate, the scholastic environment, the apostolic experiences... It will favor the personal progress of candidate, his spirit of initiative, his co-responsibility in community life, his open-mindedness to the Church and the cultural context.

Furthermore it will be an instrument of discernment of his vocational response and of his suitability to embrace definitively our state of life.

250. The *evangelical counsels* will lead the brothers to deeper understanding of their own vocational decision and to evolve towards the full conformation to Christ. The vows will become a privileged means to experiment the paternity of God, the friendship of the Son and the strength of the Spirit and to meet the brothers in mutual acceptance and in the gift of oneself.

251. Through the *fraternal life in community* he will grow in the spirit of the family and in the bond of charity. The fraternity will teach him to accept the common life as place of forgiveness and feast, assuming the conditions of progress, respecting others in their differences and feeling personally responsible.

252. With the *study* the candidate is prepared to acquire suitable competencies for the specific vocation of cleric or of Brother, and to fulfill the mission entrusted (Cf. OT 8.12)¹³⁵.

Through the philosophical, theological, charismatic, pastoral studies he will learn *nourishing the faith* (PdV 53) and connect it with the science.

253. With the *apostolic activities* he will grow in the pastoral charity and in the progressive integration of faith and life, prayer and service. In collaboration with the laity, he will have the possibility to participate progressively in the life of the Church and the Congregation, allowing himself to be formed also by the recipients of our mission.

254. The *manual work* will help him to collaborate with the divine providence, to live in the spirit of poverty in asceticism and in the sense of belonging to the House and to the Institute.

255. With appropriate *time for relaxation and physical exercise* he will learn to preserve a healthy psychophysical equilibrium (Cf. R 47), very much necessary for a qualified consecrated life and for an efficient apostolic service.

256. Through the *personal project of life* the level of human, spiritual and charismatic integration will be brought to perfection. In view of a greater vocational fidelity, necessary elements will be offered to harmonize the personal project with that of the *community and of the Congregation* will be offered.

¹³⁵ The brothers will be offered means and times necessary *to pursue the field of specialization most suitable to their abilities and to the needs of the province* (R 218). For the clerics *special attention should be given to biblical, dogmatic, spiritual, and pastoral theology, [...] deepening a doctrinal understanding of consecrated life and of the charism of the institute* (PI 61).

Formative dynamism

257. The ecclesial legislation underlines that *the formation is to be systematic, adapted to the capacity of the members, spiritual and apostolic, both doctrinal and practical. Suitable ecclesiastical and civil degrees are to be obtained, as opportunity offers* (c 660,1).

The formative dynamism will turn to the *mistagogical method*, dear to the fathers of the Church, because it favors the harmonious synthesis of the three fundamental dimensions of the Christian mystery: the *proclamation*, the *celebration* and the *life*¹³⁶.

Educational mediations

258. It is God *who all through the course of a religious life, keeps the initiative [...] through his Spirit* (PI 19). He is, therefore, the principal agent of formation, although he turns to *other mediations*, such as:

- the *professed*, called to harmonize all the aspects of his life: prayer, apostolic service, work, poverty, study, fraternal life, rest, and relationships;
- the *formative community*, that continues in the Church, the apostolic community around Jesus, listening to his Word and moving towards the Paschal experience and awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission¹³⁷;
- the *educational-pastoral community*, that qualifies particularly the apostolic experiences and the period of Tirocinium;
- the *vital context* and the familiarity with *the poor*, always of great educational efficacy.

These mediations assume different characteristics for the candidates to the Holy Orders or for the Brothers.

A. For the candidates to the Holy Orders

259. The *formative community* includes, other than the temporarily professed, the confreres who constitute the formative team: the rector - in charge of formation (Cf. R 210) -, the collaborators, like the spiritual director and the local superior, when he is not the rector. All of them, each one according to their respective role, will contribute to the growth of all and will not neglect to *involve the students themselves, especially in regard to the organization of the community, their housework and the discipline* (R 211)¹³⁸.

- It is the duty of the *rector* to organize the internal life of the formative community, accompany the personal formation of the confrere, know him

¹³⁶ The *mistagogy* gives the opportunity to place oneself before the Mystery, to proclaim it, celebrate it and live it. *Proclamation, celebration and life* could not but be integrated in the existence of every consecrated person.

¹³⁷ A life of prayer, interior profoundness, creative loyalty, vivacity, enthusiasm but also discipline in the study and generous ascetic commitment will contribute to make this community both a family which lives in joy, which glows in the Spirit of Christ and – taking the example of the Founder – nourishes profound love towards the Church and the Congregation.

¹³⁸ He can be assisted by experts in human and pastoral sciences, with the aim of offering the students those stimulations, which he needs to bring the project of consecration to its accomplishment.

and present him for Holy Orders, making himself a guarantor of his preparation (R 210)¹³⁹.

- The *spiritual director* is at the disposition of the professed for the non-sacramental internal forum¹⁴⁰. He is a religious, *officially designated to assist his brothers [...] with guidance of spiritual advice* (PI 63).
- The *ordinary confessor* is designated with shrewdness by the rector with his team, choosing him preferably among the members of our Institute¹⁴¹.

B. For the Brothers

260. The Brothers in the post-Novitiate stage will be inserted on a *formative community*, where they could be followed *both religiously and professionally* (R 219).

- The *responsible of formation* will accompany them in the vocational journey and will do his utmost so that they acquire the necessary professional competence.
- The *spiritual director* and the *confessor* will help those who are on the way to ordained ministry to deepen the necessary formation so that they could realize with full maturity the life and the mission of the Institute.
- The *context of technical-professional preparation* will prepare them to insert themselves in the mission in a qualified way.

C. In the period of Tirocinium

261. The *educational-pastoral community*, which assumes the role of the *formative community* in the period of Tirocinium, is an important mediation for all the temporarily professed. It should be able to influence positively on the maturation of the regent, through a coherent and dynamic witness of our apostolic and consecrated life¹⁴².

- The *responsible of formation* will be normally the local superior (Cf. R 201)¹⁴³. In particular cases, the legitimate superior will designate a confrere of the community as responsible. The later, referring periodically with the formator of the previous stage, will help the regent to nourish his religious growth, to

¹³⁹ In taking the decisions regarding the admission to religious profession and to ordained ministries, he will follow with diligence the criteria and the norm established by Law (Cf.: c 1024-1054; R 213-215), and will never request the opinion of the spiritual director and the confessor (Cf. c 240, 2).

¹⁴⁰ The canon Law and that of the Institute recognize to the professed *the freedom to choose other priests, who are known and have been approved by those who direct the formation House* (R 212; Cf. c 239,2).

¹⁴¹ *While maintaining the seminary discipline, the students are always to be free to approach any confessor, whether inside or outside the seminary* (c 240,1)

¹⁴² Respecting the age and the ability of the regent, the educational-pastoral community will propose a suitable work, without falling into the temptation of directing the experience of the regent only for the benefit of the apostolic activity of the House.

¹⁴³ *He is gathers them [= the regents entrusted to him] for formative encounters and keeps personal contacts with them frequently. In this he can be assisted by a confrere prepared for this purpose in a special way* (R 201).

overcome the possible difficult moments and accompany him in making unity between faith and life¹⁴⁴.

- The *spiritual director* will contribute to make a more serene and objective discernment of the will of God in the concreteness of daily life. The regent chooses him in accord with the responsible of formation.

Criteria of admission

262. For the *admission to the renewal of the temporary vows and the conferring of the ministries*, the professed should have

- achieved a *maturity proportioned* to the importance of such choice;
- reached sufficiently the *formative objectives*.

For the *admission to the perpetual profession*, besides the *above-mentioned criteria*, the confrere needs to fulfill the *requirements foreseen by our law* (Cf.: c 658,1; R 192.223).

They need to have

- completed *at least 21 years of age* (c. 658,1);
- made the *temporary vows*, for the period prescribed by number 192 of our *Regulations*;
- matured in *full freedom and renewed consciousness* the desire to make perpetual profession according to our Rule.

Request and admission

263. For the *renewal of the temporary vows*, the candidate, obtaining the favorable opinion of the formator, freely presents the request (written in hand) to the legitimate Superior. The responsible of formation, after hearing the opinion of his collaborators (Cf. R 198), will draft a report on the vocational progress made by the candidate.

264. For the *admission to the ministries of the Lector and of the Acolyte*, the candidate has to make - freely and hand written - the request and send it to the legitimate superior (Cf. R 215)¹⁴⁵. Such request will be accompanied by the written opinion of the formator, after having consulted his collaborators.

265. For the *admission to the perpetual profession*, the candidates will make *freely a petition in writing to the Provincial superior, within the period of time established by the provincial council* (R 222). The responsible of formation, after hearing the opinion of his collaborators, will draft a detailed report on the vocational growth of each one and will send it to the provincial council. *The admission is made by the provincial council with a*

¹⁴⁴ At the end of the Tirocinium, after hearing the opinion of the House council, the superior will prepare a *report on the formative experience of the candidate*; he will send it to the legitimate superior and, for information, also to the formator in charge of the following formative stage.

¹⁴⁵ Between the conferring of the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, we need to respect the interstice established by the Holy See and the Episcopal Conferences, so that they are exercised for a suitable period of time (Cf. c 1035,1). The Institute considers an *interstice of one year* to be a suitable period of time.

collegial vote (R 224), after having obtained the authorization of the superior General with the consent of his council (R 290,17)¹⁴⁶.

Liturgical Actions

266. The *renewal of the temporary vows* and the *conferring of the ministries* will be made in public, in an appropriate and simple liturgical celebration.

267. The *perpetual profession* will be made publicly with all the solemnity foreseen by the Liturgy (Cf. R 224), after sufficient period of spiritual retreat and with the adaptation of rituals foreseen by the Institute¹⁴⁷.

Juridical effects of the perpetual profession

268. The perpetual profession - *act by which, through ministry of the Church we offer ourselves totally to God for his Kingdom* (C 41), *sign of the unbreakable union of Christ with the Church, his bride* (LG 44), *culmination of the first formation* (C 98) - is *title of definitive belonging* to our Institute (Cf. C 41). With it the confrere will be definitively incorporated to our Institute with all the rights and the duties that follow (Cf.: c 654, PI 56).

¹⁴⁶ *Perpetual profession can be anticipated for a just cause, but not more than three months (c 657,3) by the provincial Superior with the consent of his council* (R 223).

¹⁴⁷ The religious profession is *celebrated during the Mass* to focus that the Eucharistic mystery has to characterize perennially the history of the one who assumes the charismatic task of being the sign of the Kingdom of heavens for the brothers in the Church. Moreover, it is in the Eucharist, the Lord grants to bring to fulfillment the offering of one self (Cf. C 94).

5.5 IMMEDIATE PREPARATION TO THE HOLY ORDERS

Nature

269. For the candidates to Priesthood or to permanent Diaconate, the formative itinerary from the very beginning is directed to the Orders; but it is intensified during the period of theological studies (Cf. R 203).

Then, there is a stage of *immediate preparation to ordained ministry in the Guanellian prospective*, during which the candidates are *properly instructed concerning the Order itself and its obligations* (c 1028)¹⁴⁸.

This stage begins in fact with the preparation to the perpetual vows.

Place and Duration

270. The *theological seminary* is the place where ordinarily the *candidates to the Priesthood* do the immediate preparation to the Orders. In this stage, *an interval of at least six months* (Cf. c 1031,1) between the Diaconate and the Priesthood must have been observed, with the exception to what is prescribed in canon 235, according to which for the admission to Priesthood, it is necessary for the candidates to have completed *at least four years of formation in the theological Seminary*.

271. The *confrere for permanent Diaconate*, in the immediate preparation to the Orders, refers to our *formative community* and to adapted diocesan centers, *following the orientations of his provincial Superior*.

The general objective

272. The formation to the Holy Orders intends to prepare the Guanellian religious called to this ministry, to *smoothly integrate these two dimensions of his unique vocation* (PI 108): that of religious and that of ordained ministry.

Intermediate objectives

273. The formative journey in this stage consists in focusing on the general objective and the *intermediate objectives* with regard to the human, spiritual and charismatic dimension.

274. The immediate formation to *Guanellian Diaconate*, permanent or transitory, has to animate the candidate to concretize the Criterion of “giving bread and the Lord” (Cf. C 70.71; Bdgm 22.42):

- in the *service of Charity*, as service to the poor life, offers the “bread”, that is, a integral human promotion;

¹⁴⁸ In particular, the *religious candidates for the priestly ministry will thus comply with the norms of the Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis and candidates for the permanent Diaconate with the norms of Ratio fundamentalis institutionis diaconorum permanentium and dispositions provided for this in the proper law of their institutes* (PI 103; Cf. c 659§3.1024-1039).

- in the *service of the Word and of the Liturgy*, offers the “Lord”, as a fully form of service to men.

275. The immediate formation to *Guanellian Priesthood*

- helps the candidate to take a deep conscience of the significance to be called and act *in persona Christi*;
- guides to live with growing intensity the *pastoral charity* (PdV 70) of Christ, Good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan, in the foot steps of the Founder;
- invigorates the experience of *ecclesial communion* with the Pope and the bishops, in docility to the Magisterium (Cf. C 14);
- begins the *triple ministry of teaching, sanctification and of government*, so that everyone reaches the fullness of life.

Formative contents

276. The preparation to the ordained ministries foresees *specific formative contents*, mostly of pastoral nature.

- In preparation to *Diaconate*, the confrere is accompanied, through a systematic and organic catechesis (Cf. PdV 39), to penetrate the theological, spiritual and pastoral meaning of the sacrament of the Order of Diaconate and the related tasks. Moreover, care will be taken so that he involves himself in qualified apostolic experiences.
- In preparation to the *Priesthood* the confrere is encouraged to consolidate his knowledge about the role of the priest and to assimilate the beauty, the dignity and the tasks of this vocation, because the priest represents sacramentally *Jesus Christ -- the head and shepherd -- authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation -- particularly in Baptism, sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of himself for the flock* (PdV 15).

277. Besides the theological and spiritual aspect, the content proposal takes care of:

- the *ministry of the Word* (homily, preaching, catechesis) directed above all to the poor, towards whom our religious family makes to flow its solitudes with preference;
- the *celebration of the Eucharist*, as fountain and summit of the liturgical action;
- the *sacrament of the Reconciliation* in such a way that the confrere is introduced gradually to the art of the confession and the guidance of the souls;
- the *Liturgy of the hours* in its significance and its values;
- *the specific characteristics of the Guanellian priestly spirituality*: Eucharistic spirituality, gift of oneself, merciful love ...
- The *juridical aspects of the priestly ministry*, that recall the norms of the Church about the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular;

- eventual *studies* - at the end of the theological course – *to obtain professional qualification* for the service of the mission¹⁴⁹.

Formative means

278. The Means of this formative stage are those presented in the previous stages, with two *specific emphases: that of pastoral and charismatic characteristics*. Particular importance will be given

- to the *personal prayer* and the celebration of the *Liturgy of the hours*, according to the requirement of the law (Cf. c 663)¹⁵⁰;
- to the *spiritual direction* also in view of the ministry of guidance and pastoral service which the candidates must practice in a short time;
- to *study*, through which they are called to live and proclaim the Word of God, grow in his spiritual life and prepare himself to fulfill his pastoral ministry of mercy (Cf. PdV 51);
- to the *apostolic activities*, as more immediate and experiential contact with the people of God and the poor, also in view of the future pastoral responsibility.

Formative dynamism

279. The formative dynamism of this stage, using again the *mistagogical method* which has characterized the years of the temporary vows, would turn around the vocational *gift* of the sacrament of the Order and the *duties* that flow from it. The educational methodology will be that of the laboratory *of pastoral charity* (PdV 72)¹⁵¹.

Educational mediations

280. Some of the educational mediations exposed in the *Reference Models* of our formative project are of particular importance in this stage.

- The *confrere candidate to the Holy Orders*, called to complete his preparation and to take more alive conscience of the sacred duties, which he is to assume, is the first responsible (Cf. PdV 69). He must strengthen the fundamental values, which motivate him and accept with confidence the discernment of the Church, the formator and the spiritual director¹⁵².

¹⁴⁹ The common sense and good will are not sufficient for the ministry. Certainly, it is necessary to have God in the heart; but to give weight to the good will we need to achieve ability and competency. Before going to serve, it is necessary that we learn to do it.

¹⁵⁰ It remains that the deacons aspiring to Priesthood are obliged to recite the Liturgy of the hours daily (Cf. c 276).

¹⁵¹ The candidate *will continue* to have experience of that gift of which he will participate in short time. This means that the pastoral charity should stimulate him to become ever better acquainted with the real situation of the men and women to whom he will be sent, to discern the call of the Spirit and to seek the most suitable methods for carrying out his ministry in future (Cf. PdV 72).

¹⁵² For instance, it would be seriously deceitful, that a candidate could hid his own homosexuality to enter, despite everything, to the ordination. A so inauthentic attitude doesn't correspond to the spirit of truth, of loyalty and of availability that has to characterize him who holds to be called to serve Christ and his Church in the priestly ministry (ICD 3).

- The *formator with his team* leads to completing the discernment of the vocation, the maturation of the candidate and, at the same time, accompanies him in the pastoral ministry.
- The *spiritual director* has the important mediation to intensify in him the self-giving to Christ and to the People of God, and to evaluate in conscience, together with him his suitability to the Orders¹⁵³.

Conclusion of the stage

281. At conclusion of the theological studies and after having made the perpetual profession, the confrere could be admitted to Diaconate. For admission to priestly ordination it is necessary that the candidate has completed the fourth year of theology. Thus, the stage of the immediate preparation to the Orders concludes.

Criteria of admission

282. The Criteria of admission, in relation to the ecclesial Laws (Cf. c 1010-1054)¹⁵⁴, are similar to those referred on for the previous stages. It is necessary, moreover, to follow *all the conditions required for the ordination, considering the nature and the obligations proper to the religious state* (PI 107). In particular, he should

- be in the progressive *conformation to Christ, the priest*;
- have a solid *human, theological and moral formation*;
- possess a deep *ecclesial sense* and docility to the Magisterium
- have reached a *spiritual maturity* proportioned to the exigencies of the apostolic work;
- be capable of keeping alive the *sense of Guanellian identity and of belonging to our religious family*.

Request and admission

283. The request and the relative admission to the Orders take place according to the Criteria and the norms established by the Church (Cf. cc 1024-1054) and by our Regulations (Cf. R 213). The confrere presents to the major superior the *request for admission to Diaconate* or to *Priesthood*, which will be accompanied by the relation of the formator (Cf. c 1051). Keeping in mind the opinion of those to whom the responsibility of formation is entrusted, the legitimate Superior must reach a morally certain judgment on his quality (Cf. c 1052,3). After having evaluated the suitability with collegial vote of his Council (R 329), he sends the request of *nulla osta* to the Superior General so that the candidate could be admitted to the Orders.

¹⁵³ The spiritual director must remember the demands of the Church with regard to the affective maturity of the priest and help him to discern the necessary qualities. He has the obligation to verify that the candidate does not present sexual disturbances incompatible with Priesthood, because in that case he has the duty to dissuade him to proceed towards the ordination.

¹⁵⁴ For the permanent Diaconate, the candidate must have completed at least 25 years of age; for the Diaconate before Priesthood, at least 23 year of age; for the Priesthood, at least 25 years of age (Cf. c. 1031).

Ordinations

284. The *Diaconate ordination* is preceded by a course of spiritual retreat and the fulfillment of requirements of Law: the *profession of faith* and the *Oath of fidelity*. The Ordination, for valid pastoral motives, could take place in a formation House or in another place.

The *priestly ordination* preceded by a course of spiritual retreat, the *profession of faith* and by the *Oath of fidelity*, is celebrated with solemnity and preferably in the parish of the candidate.

5.6 PERMANENT FORMATION

Nature

285. Since the consecrated life “*is a progressive taking on of the attitude of Christ*”, *it seems evident that such a path must endure for a lifetime and involve the whole person, heart, mind and strength shaping the person in the likeness of the Son who gives himself to the Father for the good of humanity. Thus understood, formation is no longer only a teaching period in preparation for vows but also represents a theological way of thinking about the consecrated life, which is in itself a never-ending formation. It is the “sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions in the heart the inner attitudes of the Son”* (VC 66).

Initial formation, then, should be closely connected with ongoing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their life (VC 69).

Every stage of life has different tasks to fulfill, a particular way of being, of serving and of loving (Cf. VC 70).

The Permanent formation is a *continuous commitment* to live projects of personal and of Institute’s conversion¹⁵⁵, and to work assiduously on an updated and competent¹⁵⁶ way, also in front of the challenges of a world that changes at accelerated speed (Cf. PI 67).

In different seasons of the existence

286. Since it is permanent, the formation has to accompany always the members of the Institute, *in every phase and condition of his life, at every level of responsibility he has in the Church [...]. Clearly then, the possibilities for formation and the different kinds of formation are connected with the variety of ages, conditions of life and with d trusted to him.* (PdV 76).

The apostolic exhortations *Vita consecrata* and *Pastores dabo vobis* briefly go through the stages of life assigning to each stage a responsibility to carry ahead also amidst unavoidable crisis.

- The *first years* of full involvement in the apostolate are a period of youthfulness of love and enthusiasm for Christ, but they are also the years of new way of walking in the life of the Spirit. (Cf.: PdV 76; VC 70).
- The next stage, *adult and still youthful stage*, is the season of finding the essential, but also of the delusions¹⁵⁷. Therefore, it has to be lived *in a continued and*

¹⁵⁵ It is only during the course of the years and in the alternation of evolutive seasons that *the individual*, in the concreteness and uniqueness of his consecrated life can bring to fulfillment the ideal embraced. *The Institute*, while assuring every confrere the conditions for a continuous formation, extends to the whole Congregation the necessary global process of renewal (Cf. PI 68).

¹⁵⁶ The permanent formation is *a sociological factor which in our days affects all areas of professional activity* (PI 67).

¹⁵⁷ Disappointments could easily arise because of poor results, routine, interior fatigue or a certain presumption and self-sufficiency.

balanced checking of oneself and one's activity (PdV 77), and constantly *looking for motivation and aids which will enable him to carry on one's mission* (PdV 77).

- The *matured age* marks in some way the fulfillment of the spiritual fatherhood of the consecrated person and the apostolic vigor (Cf. VC 70). But there are critical situations that could emerge, due to external factors (such as change of assignment, lack of success, misunderstandings and feelings of alienation...) or personal factors (physical or mental illness, spiritual aridity, individualism, crisis of faith or feelings ...).
- The *advanced age* is the moment of wisdom and handing over of office to the more young confreres, as well the gradual withdrawal from activity, and in some cases it is the hour of sickness, forced immobility, awaiting to return to the Father (Cf. VC 70)¹⁵⁸. It could constitute a stage highly formative for the confrere and for the community, if it is lived as Paschal experience.

Stages

287. Considering that the whole formative process is placed in the prospect of the ongoing formation, the period that follows the perpetual profession and the conferring of the Orders is considered as *stage of permanent formation*.

In order to adapt ourselves better in accompanying, we divide this stage in *two phases* - the *Tutelage* and the *permanent formation properly said*.

A. Tutelage

288. The *Tutelage* marks the passage from the initial formation to the full and more autonomous involvement in the apostolic life. It represents *a critical stage, marked by the passage from a supervised life to a situation full of responsibility for one's work* (VC 70)¹⁵⁹.

For this reason, through the years of tutelage, the Institute offers the opportunity that an experienced confrere helps the confreres in the first years of the apostolic activities to live with enthusiasm and equilibrium the *sequela Christi*, in the service to the Church and to the Congregation.

B. Permanent formation

289. The *Permanent formation properly said* begins after the tutelage and prolongs until the final meeting with God the Father. It makes that we, fully inserted in the life and the apostolic work of the Institute, continue the formative commitment to persevere in faith and remain well-rooted in the values of our vocation (C 99) and *perfect [assiduously] the spiritual, doctrinal e technical culture* (PC 18).

¹⁵⁸ The Guanellian awaits the death with serenity and prepares himself to live it as the supreme act of love and self-giving. With same attitude of the Son, he is ready to fulfill his personal Passover *saying with the Church: 'Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!'* (C 37).

¹⁵⁹ In the *stage of tutelage*, while they *continue the sound and serious formation they have received in initial formation* (PdV 76), the confreres *will gradually lead [...] to grasp and incarnate the unique wealth of God's gift [...] to express their capabilities and ministerial attitude, also through an ever more convinced and responsible insertion* (PdV 76) in the life and in the apostolate of our communities.

General objective

290. The general objective of the Permanent formation is that of accompanying confreres and community to progress in holiness, *until everyone arrives at the unity of faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* (Eph. 4:13).

It is necessary therefore, to rekindle the divine gift that is within us, living it in its original beauty (Cf. 2 Tm 1:6), *according to the evangelical counsels and with the strength of charity daily lived in fraternal communion and in a generous apostolic spirituality* (SafC 4).

Intermediate objectives

291. The Intermediate objectives to be pursued in the human, spiritual and charismatic dimension are indicated by our Regulations: *the renewal of the individual confreres [...]; the deepening of their Guanellian identity; the periodical verification of their apostolic religious life, so that it may be always respondent to the demands of the Church and the world; the renewal of community life in its ability to announce and witness the Gospel message and in its involvement with the over-all pastoral ministry* (R 226). Therefore:

- in the *human dimension* the religious will be helped *to be always on journey, [...] to look forward, to face the new and find new energies, new scopes* (PI 67), to accept peacefully the crisis, the change of role, the sickness, the old age...;
- in the *spiritual dimension* he will take care of a relationship always more deep and personal with God. The confrere will value the means of Christian spirituality. He will also profit from the small things, from the ordinary activities and the experiences of life, and to improve his theological, cultural and pastoral formation in order to be prepared to sustain a fruitful dialogue with the men of our times (Cf. GS 43);
- in the *charismatic dimension* he will be in contact with the origins of the charism and his vocation, to strengthen the Guanellian identity and the sense of belonging in the creative fidelity, and obtain a renewed apostolic vigor.

Formative Contents

292. The formative contents of this stage foresee specific contribution for the stage of the Tutelage and for that of the Permanent formation properly said.

- In the *Tutelage* the contents consolidate the formation received in the initial formation, in order to participate validly in the activities of the mission and manifest better the personal abilities and the apostolic attitudes (Cf.: PdV 76; VC 70)¹⁶⁰. They would offer, in particular, adequate proposals to value the personal plan of life, the projects of community and Congregation.
- In the stage of the *Permanent formation properly said* the contents would lead to a more profound discovery of the sense and the quality of the consecration and of the apostolate.

¹⁶⁰ The content proposal is not *a repetition of formation acquired in initial formation, simply reviewed or expanded with new and practical suggestions. Ongoing formation involves relatively new content and especially methods; it develops as a harmonious and vital process which -- rooted in the formation received in the seminary -- calls for adaptations, updating and modifications, but without sharp breaks in continuity* (PdV 71).

- The theological-pastoral-professional refresher courses would help the confreres to take root always more in the fidelity to the commitments undertaken, to strengthen the spirituality of communion, the apostolic efficacy, the belongingness to the Institute and to the Church, and to face with serene heart the growing up in age and the challenges of the present time.

The *themes* will be those proposed previously, but interpreted in the prospective of the gradualism and the cyclicity¹⁶¹.

The Formative means

293. The educational means are those listed previously. They aim to *keep alive the freshness and authenticity of the beginnings while, at the same, instilling the courage of boldness and inventiveness needed to respond to the signs of the times* (SafC 20). In this stage, we workout so that each confrere could fling his consecrated life so that it could be always “more life”, “more consecrated” and “more apostolic”.

294. The *Word of God* will be *nourishment for life, for prayer and for the daily journey, the principle which unifies the community in oneness of thought, the inspiration for ongoing renewal and apostolic creativity* (SafC 24).

295. The *liturgical actions* would improve to participate in the salvific dynamism of the Paschal mystery and would make the community “*a House and a school of communion* (NMI 43; Cf. c 663-664). In particular, the *Eucharist* will help to *comprehend how true it is that we really are children loved and saved* (C 11)¹⁶²; the sacrament of *Penitence* will heal and purify (Cf. C 44), making us feel at the same time “sinners loved” and “wounded healers”.

296. The *prayer* induces us fix our eyes “*more than ever fixed on the face of the Lord* (NMI 16) and, in the fidelity to the obligation of the *Liturgy of the hours*, will fulfill that constant union with God and with his people would be realized.

297. The *spiritual direction* would favor the fidelity to the vocational project and would strengthen the inclination to personal prayer, meditation, fraternal communion, revision and service.

¹⁶¹ The frame work of the *themes* could be the following: the Christian and charismatic anthropology, the primacy of God, the Church and its mission, the Virgin Mary, renewal of religious life, the spirit and the charism of the Congregation, the Constitutions and Regulations, the evangelical counsels, the fraternal life in community, the spirituality of communion, our apostolic mission, the inculturation, the pastoral and professional preparation, the ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

¹⁶² *The community looks at the Eucharistic sacrifice as the source and climax of its life. The members celebrate it every day, uniting their own “praying and suffering” to the oblation of Christ our Passover. They draw renewed energy from their communion with the Body of the Lord for preserving unity and charity and for becoming bread broken for the life of the world* (C 32).

298. The *dialogue* with the Superiors and with the confreres would promote the confession of the Trinitarian communion, the sign of the evangelical fraternity and the service of charity. Furthermore, it disposes towards a better knowledge of oneself, the revision of life and forgiveness. In moments of personal and/or community discomfort, *psycho-diagnostic consultations* and *appropriate therapies* could be useful (Cf. FIC 38).

299. The *evangelical counsels* would lead (the religious) to be *a living memorial of Jesus, living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and to the brethren* (VC 22). Furthermore, they would promote *the culture the Beatitudes*¹⁶³, in support of the life and the witness of the Christian people (Cf. PC 12).

- Because of advancement of hedonism, *chastity* would be an expression of a heart that knows the beauty and the value of the love of God, to maintain the inviolable belonging to Christ (Cf. C 43) and to love as he loved.
- In front of the thirst for money, the *poverty* would help to be free from the slavery to things and to artificial needs which drive consumer society and leads to the rediscovery of Christ, the only treasure truly worth living for (Cf. SafC 22). A modest life and the readiness to serve the more needy reminds that God is the imperishable and true good.
- In the light of individualism and relativism, for which persons are the only norm by themselves, the *obedience* would induce to place one's life entirely in Christ's hands, so that *he may use it according to God's design and make it a masterpiece* (SafC 22). With the offering of what we love the most, that is the will and the freedom, we live again in the Church the obedience of Christ, *also when it is obscure and difficult* (C 57), in order to assume with love the duties that the Providence sets for us (Cf. C 55).

300. The *fraternal life* among those who share the same "name" and the same "gift" will be assumed as place of communion, where each one rediscovers *the divine and human value of being together freely in friendship [...], as disciples gathered around Christ the Teacher* (SafC 29). At the same time, it will be a place of mutual encouragement to overcome the difficulties and become a school of *inculturation*. Finally, it would call the confreres to make it *animating core of the sanctity and of the mission*¹⁶⁴ and form them into *active centers of evangelical charity* (C 75).

301. *The ecclesiology of communion* would impress, in the formative process, the model of "formation together" with the people of God. Such ecclesiology requires:

¹⁶³ BENEDICT XVI, *Exhortation to the religious, men and women, to the members of the secular Institutes and to Societies of apostolic life of the Diocese of Rome, 10/12/2005.*

¹⁶⁴ The Guanellian religious community is referred to as *animating core* and that it is the motor, nodal point, centre, from which originate witnesses, impulses of initiatives, formative proposals, stimulus for the building up of extended community, which in the family spirit involves, persons entrusted to our care, relatives and assistants, laity and religious, to the extent of becoming a true experience of Church, a sign of that great plan of God, that wants to make all men his own family.

- To walk in unity with the Pope and the bishops, accepting with faith and filial obedience their Magisterium. It is the concrete application of the *feeling with the Church*, proper to all the faithful (SafC 32; Cf. PI 109).
- To proceed *together with the Laity* to learn what it means to be Christians, in strength of the baptism, despite with the specificity of our charism. Therefore, we need to be formed together with lay people, who are ever more present and active in the life of the Church and of the Congregation.

302. *The cultural preparation* would offer to each one of us the possibility to refresh our intellectual formation, in harmony with the ecclesial guidelines and the signs of the times and to revive our own way of being and of doing. This could take place through

- biblical, spiritual, theological, pastoral and charismatic *refresher courses*;
- *integral formation courses*, that offer the occasion to verify periodically the guidelines of *Ratio Formationis* and the directives of the General Chapters;
- *courses on the administration of material goods*, which, thanks to the professional collaboration of the laity, would help to take financial and management decisions according to the exigencies of our charism and in line with the civil laws;
- the *personal study*, would stimulate every confrere towards a constant updating with the aim at empowering one's own culture, favoring a constructive dialogue with the modernity and proclaim the Gospel as service to the truth (Cf. SafC 39).

303. The *professional preparation* would value the personal ability of each one and would place him in the heart of the mission of the Institute. The progress of the human sciences in the field of education and rehabilitation demands updating and expertise in our mission field, besides faith and love.

304. The *apostolic activities* would help us to be the face of the Church in its preferential concern for the poor and would encourage to spread creatively the culture of charity of Christ also through new forms of service. In their turn, the poor will evangelize us with their life of patience, prayer and sacrifice.

305. With the *work* we share the life of the poor and improve our growth in the gift of oneself and in the material and moral contribution to the community. The "*oremus et laboremus*" as for the Founder becomes therefore motive of joy and of service.

306. *Time for personal relaxation and physical exercise* help us to overcome the unavoidable tensions of life and to maintain that psycho-physical equilibrium much necessary for the effectiveness of our ministry and to manifest the serenity, which *is contagious and able to bind the persons*.

307. The *personal project of life, and the project of the community and Congregation* helps us to grow always more in the passion for Christ and for men. They would serve, in consonance with the Constitution, to tread the path of holiness and manifest our apostolic vitality in the Church.

Formative Dynamism

308. The educational dynamism requires that the permanent formation should be *integral and gradual*, in view of the *communion and self-formation* (Cf. Bdgm 18), of a daily *rebirth from above* (Cf. Jn. 3: 3; 5-8) and the *unity of life in the pastoral charity*. All this leads to work together for the construction of the Kingdom of God, to overcome the conflicts; to cultivate appropriate fraternal relationships; to elaborate a shared mission, to coordinate well the apostolic activities; to adequately collaborate with one another and with the laity and to ask pardon...

The formative dynamism avails itself of several ways so to reach communion, to arrive at unity, to promote the systems of communication, participation and belonging; we privilege the *school of reciprocity*, which makes to converge the diversity in unity and to transform the community into animating core of the mission.

Educational mediations

309. The educational mediations are those referred to in the *Reference Models*. But it is good to give particular importance to the action of the Spirit and of the Congregation at various levels.

310. The *Holy Spirit* with his presence and his gifts accompanies our vocational fidelity, vivifying from inside the Consecration and the life of the Institute. He is the soul of the interior life, of our staying together and of the mission.

311. The Institute takes care of each and everyone of its members with the fatherly love and expresses its care in the formative concern of its *governing organs*.

312. The *communities* are the usual context where every confrere completes his formation and finds the more immediate support in his difficulties. In this sense they are teachers of their members and, at the same time, in need of consolidating in the fidelity. They will try to qualify themselves as places of true fraternity, evangelical renewal and listening to the appeals coming from the Church and the world.

So also they will try to be community for the Kingdom, places of transcendence and matrix of Guanellian vocational identity. One of their more delicate tasks would be that of facing the conflicts in adequate way¹⁶⁵ and integrate wisely the community life and the mission.

¹⁶⁵ It is not *the conflicts or the tensions* to create problem, but it is the *way of facing them*. If the community is “formative”, then it becomes an important occasion of conversion and growth.

313. The *local superiors* are called to offer to the confreres the necessary elements to assimilate the values of the consecrated life and the demands of the mission¹⁶⁶. They animate to value the everyday life, to confront with the times and to walk in the fidelity. In harmony with project of the Institute, they assure to the confreres convenient period and suitable initiatives for their human, spiritual and charismatic growth.

314. Each *confrere* remains the first agent of his own formation¹⁶⁷. Moreover, everyone being involved in the pastoral activity will take care to preserve his specific identity of Servant of Charity *invited unceasingly to give an attentive, new and responsible reply* (PI 29). Even though immersed in the apostolic activities, he will take care to reserve times of personal formation to guarantee his specific identity of Servant of Charity and infuse fecundity to his apostolate.

315. In both the phases of this stage there is a *responsible of formation*.

- In the stage of the *Tutelage* the *responsible* is designated by the legitimate Superior; he is a confrere who would create *'a suitable support structure, with appropriate guides and teachers [in which the confreres under Tutelage] can find, in an organized and continuous way, the help they need to make a good start in their service* (PdV 76). He would inform the legitimate Superior periodically on the condition of the formative process of the confreres in tutelage.
- In the *stage of the permanent formation* properly said the legitimate Superior should provide that *the religious, all during their lives, have access to spiritual guides or counselors, adapted to their greater maturity and their actual circumstances* (PI 71). For this scope the Superiors will arrange particular itineraries of ongoing formation on the basis of the ecclesial and congregational directives (Cf. R 230-231) and will avail – according to the opportunity - the services of a qualified provincial team of ongoing formation and will designate a provincial responsible of ongoing formation (cf. PI 71) defining his role and tasks.

Eternal praise

316. Our existence of consecrated persons at whatever age becomes for each one an occasion of proclamation of the Gospel and service to life. In the course of the years we continue amidst the poor the ministry of Christ, good Shepherd and compassionate Samaritan (Cf. SafC 38).

Joyful for the presence of Christ and confident in the Providence¹⁶⁸, we feel accompanied by Virgin Mary our Mother, until *reaching the end of our lives, we will be willing to commend our spirit into the hands of the Father and to fulfill our personal Passover* (C

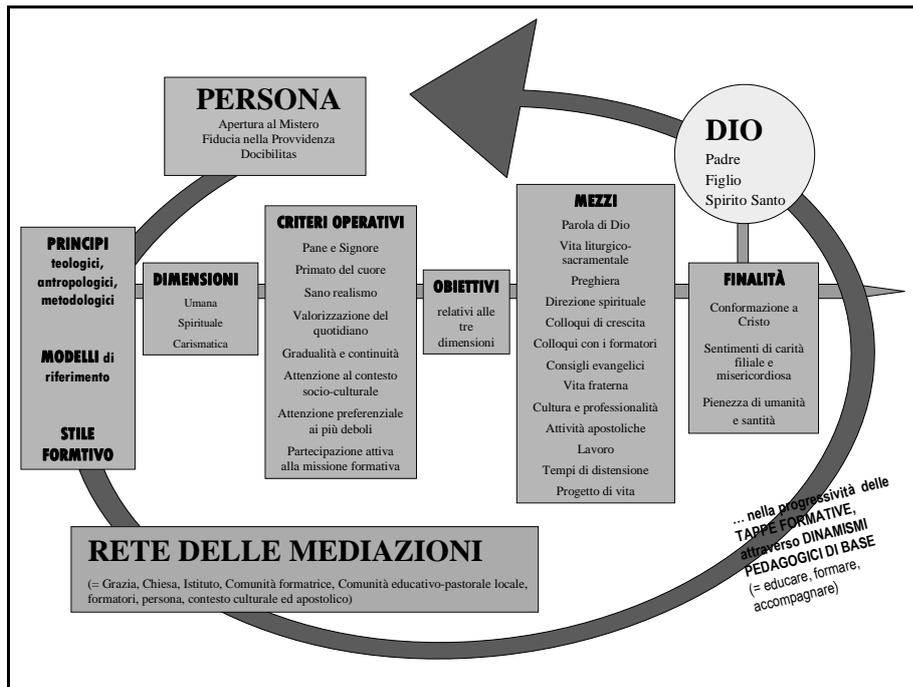
¹⁶⁶ The superiors turn to be at service of the charity authoritatively if they open the way towards Christ and if they live personally the evangelical radicalism..

¹⁶⁷ *We are convinced that for ongoing formation, as for any vital growth process, personal responsibility is indispensable* (C 100).

¹⁶⁸ *The Lord is a good Father to us and could never leave the children who trust in him without the help they need. It is primarily on this assurance that we base our hope and willingness to remain in his love till the end.* (C 102).

317. Everything would conclude with *the eternal praise*, which would resound eternally in the celestial harmony.

This is the prospective which the Founder offers to us, when he writes: *There will be the good Servants of Charity, who with faith have helped the poor daily, many times for many years. Those good Servants of Charity who during their life never said, "That's it! It is enough!" in their works of charity and self-sacrifice; they will ascend with Jesus Christ on high, and will possess the Kingdom, which the Lord in his infinite goodness has prepared for them since the beginning of creation. What reward! What a triumph!*¹⁶⁹.



The formation of the Servants of Charity: theological-anthropological-educational model.

¹⁶⁹ L. GUANELLA, *1910 Regulations of Servants of Charity*, trans. Peter di Tullio, S.C., vol. 2, USA, 1993, 10.

CONCLUSION

318. In the complex and difficult cultural transition in which we live, the formation constitutes the *key point* of our Consecration: placed at the crossroads of many desires and prospective, it is *the name of the present and the future of the Institute*.

The formative project places at the center of its attention the person, with the intention of making him evolve towards that fullness of humanity and of transcendence inscribed in the divine plan.

We ourselves, therefore, are at center of formation, *with our vocation*, destined to become manifestation of the love of God in the world; after there are *also the demands of our charism*: the charity, the inner recalling of the heart, and the needs of the Church in the world of today. We could say that at the center there is *a heart*: our heart and that of the local community and that of the entire Congregation. It is a heart to be educated, formed and accompanied so that it could beat in harmony with the heart of Christ.

319. The *Ratio Formationis*, by the ways of the heart, opens to us the horizon of the *creative fidelity*: above all towards God. Fidelity, which by the ways of Providence becomes filial belonging to the Institute, merciful love to the poor and the communion with the Church. This is possible *when one sticks firmly to the small but irreplaceable daily fidelities: first of all, fidelity to prayer and to listening to the Word of God; fidelity to the service of the men and women of our time, in accordance with one's own charism; fidelity to the teaching of the Church, starting with that on the consecrated life; fidelity to the Sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist, which support us day after day in life's difficult situations*¹⁷⁰.

No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you!* (NMI 29). This awareness moves us to be dynamic men, capable of looking forward confidently.

320. The formation is necessary also *for the flourishing of new vocations*, because renewing the Institute and its members, it becomes the indispensable premise for the coming up and the perseverance of the same vocations.

Our life is valued decisively on the frontiers of the authenticity: there will be vigor if we are *men of God* and *men of Communion*, and if we know to infuse to the life that character of *evangelical simplicity*, for which the Lord exclaimed saying: *I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have kept these things hidden to the wise and to the intelligent and have revealed it to the little ones* (Math 11:25).

¹⁷⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the men and women religious, members of secular Institutes and Societies of apostolic life of the Roma Diocese*, 10/12/2005.

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