

# **The Present State of the Formation of our students throughout the World**

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In the reflection on the state of the Congregation carried out at the last General Assemblies, one of the aspects which necessarily has been presented with a particular prominence is that of vocations and their formation. It is, in effect, something of vital importance, not so much for the survival of the Congregation, as much as that there be in the Church continuers of the evangelization of the poor according to the charism and spirit of St. Vincent.

The General Assembly of 1980 asked the Superior General to publish a *Ratio Formationis* for the Internal Seminary. The General Assembly of 1986 formulated the same petition for the Vincentian Major Seminary and about the formation of the Brothers. The Superior General published the *Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary* in 1982; the *Ratio Formationis Vincentianae for the Major Seminary* in 1988 and the document, *Brothers for the Mission*, in 1991.

In the same way the General Assembly of 1992 asked the Superior General to promote the elaboration of a new instruction about the vows in the Congregation. On January 25, 1996, the Superior General published the *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience in the Congregation of the Mission*. All of these documents, including the last, emphasize a Vincentian formation for a deeper and more lively identification with our charism.

As for the promotion and the recruitment of vocations, the aspirations of the Assemblies have acquired definitive form in Statute 37:1, which says: "Provinces, houses and individual members should actively engage in encouraging candidates for the Vincentian mission."

## **They undertake the Mission of Jesus Christ**

The candidate, arriving at a decision to begin the specific preparation for a missionary, is accompanied by the formation personnel.

Allow me to remember with gratitude my formators and, in them, all of the formators we have had in the Congregation. I had formators who were truly exemplary for their sanctity, knowledge and generosity. I owe them almost everything I am as a Vincentian.

The ministry of the formation of our students is of the utmost importance and very pleasing in the eyes of God. It is continuing the work which Christ the Lord did patiently with the disciples: "Dedicating oneself to the formation of good priests and cooperating with that work ... is to undertake the mission of Jesus Christ, who during his earthly life, took on the task of making twelve good priests, his apostles, choosing because of that to live with them for several years to instruct and form them in this divine ministry" (SVP XI, 703). The Son of God "began

preaching the Gospel to the poor; later, in time, he chose the apostles, he labored to instruct, admonish and form them, and finally he filled them with his own spirit, not just for themselves, but for all the nations on earth" (XI, 390).

This is an activity which demands sacrifice and, at times, is not very gratifying. That is why all formation personnel deserve a word of thanks from the whole Congregation. They do the Lord's work and with their sacrifice and self-giving present to him, to the Church and to the Congregation the most precious fruit that they have to offer.

From another perspective this is a ministry which, from the beginning, belongs inseparably to the historic structure of the Congregation and is destined to its particular end: "Do you not know, Father, that we are obliged to form good clerics just as we are obliged to instruct the country people, and that a priest of the Mission who wishes to do one of these things and not the other would only be half a missionary" (VII, 476-477).

## **I. A look at the origins**

The idea of contributing to the formation of the clergy originated in St. Vincent when, on the occasion of preaching missions, he became aware on the one hand of the situation of the poor people of the countryside and on the other hand of the decadence of the clergy. His contribution to the formation of the clergy had as its particular goal to assure the fruits of the missions: "We also try to contribute to the formation of good clerics by means of the retreats for ordinands and seminaries, not to abandon the missions, but rather to preserve fruits that are achieved through them" (IV, 46). For the saint the missions and the formation of the clergy are two complementary roads to the evangelization of the poor. Both ministries figure in the legacy that the founder left to his Congregation.

St. Vincent was creative in this regard. He formed the clergy through various initiatives: a close relationship with priests, the retreats for ordinands, the Tuesday Conferences, retreats, the seminaries and even through his contributions in the Council of Conscience.

From the beginning until the end of his life he contributed to the formation of priests. The bull *Salvatoris Nostri*, dated January 12, 1633, approving the Congregation, affirmed that the objective of the Congregation is to seek the salvation "of the souls that live in the towns, villages, lands and most humble places" and "to instruct those who are to be promoted to sacred orders, trying to help them make retreats" (X, 307).

In the Common Rules, St. Vincent, at the point of closing the cycle of his missionary life, will tell us clearly that the end of the Congregation is "to dedicate oneself to one's own perfection," "to the evangelization of the poor," and to help clerics achieve the knowledge and virtue necessary for their state" (CR 1:1). In the conference of December 6, 1658, the missionaries heard from St. Vincent's own lips these expressions: God "called us to contribute to form good priests, to give good pastors to the parishes and to teach them what they needed to know and practice. What an important task!" (XI, 390). This firm objective of the saint was confirmed by the twenty-one seminaries opened during his lifetime.

## **At Home**

It should be remembered that St. Vincent, while he employed all sorts of resources in the formation of the diocesan clergy, also was taking steps to guarantee the future of his favorite work: the Congregation of the Mission.

The development of the Congregation was halting and gradual. The saint avoided haste at the moment of taking in followers to his nascent community. He wrote to Antoine Portail: "The number of those who have entered since you left is six. How I fear, Sir, great numbers and recruitment" (I, 343).

The first to join the cause were ordained clerics. The *Act of Association* of the first missionaries, signed in Paris on September 4, 1626 (X, 242-243) shows us that. Attracted by the manner of the saint and to the ministry which they proposed to undertake, the missions and formation of the clergy, they came to join the newly-formed community. The saint never ceased to be demanding with regard to the purity of intention and the basic virtues of the candidates: "Ten men who are as they ought to be are worth more than a hundred; and a hundred who have not been called or who do not respond to God's plans are not worth even as much as ten" (II, 271).

In time those who asked admittance were usually young men who were not ordained and were at least seventeen years old. In the beginning, for about ten years, the responsibility for formation fell on St. Vincent because of the lack of solid structures and trained personnel.

## **They spend two years in the seminary**

In the year 1637, when the numbers of those who were knocking on the door of the Congregation had grown, St. Vincent opened the first internal seminary at St. Lazare. Beginning with this decision the number of petitions for admittance grew: "Our seminary is very full, thanks be to God; there are thirty-six or thirty-eight students. We received several last month"(II, 271).

The saint consolidated this institution by giving it structures which were at the same time solid and flexible. The internal seminary is obligatory for everyone (III, 188); in it the seminarian's vocation is strengthened: "the years of testing are not to recognize if they have the required dispositions, since it is necessary to have recognized these beforehand, rather these attitudes are further strengthened (VI, 149); the seminary lasts two years: "They have two years of seminary"(I, 552); the seminarian usually lives separated from the other clerics: "For various reasons the seminarians do not associate with the priests" (I, 552); they leave the house accompanied, they make a retreat every six months (CR X, 9); they do not study and do the seminary at the same time because: "this would be an impediment to validly making vows" (VII, 410); he allows to seminarians who are finishing the seminary to study philosophy (VIII, 391); the seminarians are sent on the missions: "we just sent two seminarians this morning to the mission in Champagne, and tomorrow or the next day we will send seven or eight in two groups" (II, 295). The daily communal activities were the same as in the other local communities: morning prayer, study time, Eucharist, examen, meals, recreation and times of silence. The program included reading of the Sacred Scriptures and spiritual authors and catechism (I, 551-552). At the end of the first year, the seminarians made good purposes.

San Vincent gradually delegated part of the responsibility for formation to well-prepared missionaries. During the saint's life two seminaries were opened in France: St. Lazare and Richelieu.

The attention that St. Vincent gave to the seminary shows that, besides dedicating himself to the formation of the clergy, he was also interested in strengthening the formation of his own students. At stake was the survival of his most cherished work: the Congregation of the Mission and, definitely, the proclamation of the Good News to the poor.

If we have to remember one characteristic of St. Vincent as a formator of missionaries, we would have to point out his interest in centering the life of the aspirants in Jesus Christ, the evangelizer of the poor, in order to serve the Church by means of the missions and the formation of the clergy. The letters and conferences directed to the missionaries by the saint make very clear the deepest personal convictions which he tried to transmit to his students.

### **They do not forget to dedicate themselves to the necessary studies**

Taking into account the growing number of candidates, St. Vincent decided to create a center for studies. This was an indispensable work for the nascent community. Without a common, harmonious and articulated preparation, the new community, made up of men from different backgrounds, would have lacked a common identity and ideals.

The first center for studies was set up at Bons Enfants. The not very spacious building also held other works at the same time: the clerical seminary for ordinands, a retreat house, a residence for travelling priests and the study center for the Congregation. In a letter of February 3, 1639 to Robert de Sergis, St. Vincent alluded to the fact that interests us: we have sent "this year ten or twelve to study theology at Bons Enfants" (I, 530).

The distinctive elements of the formation given to the students by St. Vincent are not known. He preferred the use of a good manual to dictated lectures (II, 179); piety, the virtues and the Eucharist took on special importance; and the same can be said for the liturgy, dogmatics, moral theology, the administration of the sacraments, catechesis, cases of conscience and disputed questions: "there are two who debate: one argues against and the other defends. This is the way to become wise. This same practice is done in the seminaries, at Bons Enfants and in many other places" (IX, 1149).

In any case the method would have been orthodox and oriented towards practice (X, 227). During the time of studies certain pastoral activities were included: "where there is a seminary, it is convenient that we have a parish so that the seminarians can practice there" (VII, 220). The chair of dogmatics was suppressed at Bons Enfants: "I have heard that the Scholasticism taught at Bons Enfants is of little use, practically worthless; I have considered doing away with it so that they can study Scholasticism at the College of Navarre or the Sorbonne (X, 227).

The project was oriented towards the formation of missionaries with a good, practical preparation and capable for the ministry of the missions and seminaries. St. Vincent warned his students against studies that were not oriented to action. He tried to form pastors not doctors.

Frequently he advised his students about avoiding certain temptations: sacrificing piety to know more, the danger of vanity and false curiosity (XI, 49-51; 372-373; 722). At the same time, despite what has sometimes been said, the holy Founder wanted well-prepared missionaries in his community: "they will not cease to dedicate themselves to the studies necessary to carry out well the activities of a missionary" (CR XII, 8).

Practically all of the missionaries of the Congregation passed through these two institutions, the internal seminary and the center for studies, during the saint's lifetime.

The above-mentioned facts suffice to bring us to a primary conclusion: St. Vincent directed his life and the lives of many others to the evangelization of the poor. To support this goal he presented his own spirituality. Moreover, he was concerned with developing strategies to achieve this end by including and preparing his closest collaborators. He dedicated himself for life to the ministry of missions and the formation of the clergy, without leaving aside assuring the future of the Congregation by forming his own students as well as he could.

The Congregation has received as its inheritance the parcel that St. Vincent cultivated with his own hands: the poor, to whom we get close, above all, through certain ministries: the evangelizing mission, the formation of the clergy and, without a doubt, the strengthening of our own community by the formation of our candidates. It does not seem opportune to forget some of these ministries under the pretext of promoting others. The missions, the formation of the clergy and the impulse given to the formation of new vocations for the Congregation guarantee the future.

## **II. Lines of action for the Formation of our Students today**

The Constitutions, coming from the General Assembly of 1980, make reference to the foundation of the clergy (C 1, 3; 15) and the formation of our own students (C 77-95). The General Assemblies of 1986 and 1992 moved in the same direction. These facts show the present consciousness of the Congregation concerning priestly formation and translate into two aspirations:

On the one hand, in accordance with the inheritance received from St. Vincent, there exists the ministry of clerical formation, although very reduced in the number of confreres involved in the work. The former superior general, Fr. Richard McCullen, in his reflection on the state of the Congregation, put forth at the General Assembly of 1992, manifested that the number of confreres dedicated to the formation of the diocesan clergy has gone down.

On the other hand the Congregation in the post-conciliar period has developed with regard to the formation of our own students new roads and a new theory, rooted in the Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary and the Major Seminary.  
Formation on the Different Continents

At the present time the formation of our students is based on the documents of the Church, the Episcopal Conferences, Constitutions, Statutes and the Ratio Formationis of the C.M. But, at the same time, the peculiarities of the various cultures continue to find a place in the local formation programs, due to the efforts at inculturation by the Provinces.

## **a. The European Provinces**

### *The Internal Seminary*

Usually each province in Europe forms its candidates in its own internal seminary. Nevertheless, the tendency towards unification, due to the reduced number of seminarians and the need to take better advantage of the available formation personnel, has been manifested in the last few years.

Right now the internal seminary is inter-provincial in France, Poland-Slovakia and, as things are developing, it seems that it will be in Italy and Spain.

The Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary has a decisive influence in the direction of the seminary. On the other hand the provinces have approved their own formation plans and have tried to give to the seminary the means for a good formation. Frequently the number of seminarians for each province is small, which permits a personalized formation, far from any possible mass program. The closeness between formators and students is clear. The young men who enter the seminary have a human and Christian maturity superior to that of their predecessors in relatively recent times. Generally the present seminarians begin the seminary after having done the studies necessary to enter the university and, in some cases, after having passed through a postulancy which sometimes includes in the program a part of the philosophy studies.

### *The Major Seminary*

Of the European provinces and the Middle East only Poland and Rome, in Cracow and Piacenza, run their own respective centers of philosophical-theological studies, where their own students study. The other two Italian provinces, Turin and Naples, are taking steps to send their respective students to Piacenza which is the responsibility of the Roman Province. This center of studies would become in certain aspects inter-provincial. The Province of Turin has a theological institute in Genoa which lay people and religious attend. The other provinces send their students to academic centers run by groups other than the Congregation of the Mission.

In the first two post-conciliar decades the majority of the provinces, following the tone set by numerous orders and religious congregations, closed the center of studies, which until then had students and teachers who were members of the same congregation. The students were sent to other academic centers in which they received classes in the basic institutional cycle whose ownership fell to a diocese or religious congregation or, as sometimes happens, was shared.

With the exception of the province of Poland, which is responsible for the diocesan seminaries of Gdańsk, Jordanowo and Grodno, the latter in Byelorussia, none of the other European provinces lends a similar service to any diocese on the old continent.

## **b. The Provinces of Africa and Madagascar**

### *Internal Seminary*

Each of the African Provinces continues to receive candidates for the Congregation in its own internal seminary. If it were not for the great distances and for the diversity of languages and cultures, interprovincial collaboration could be undertaken and would result in a great benefit for all. Sometimes on their own initiative the Visitors, because of the reduced numbers of their own seminarians, have looked for short-term solutions, sending candidates to the other provinces.

The growing number of men entering the African seminaries is well known. The Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary is the common link in formation. On the other hand in the African continent the Church has made a special effort to inculturate the Gospel. The different seminaries of the Congregation are not separate from this very necessary option.

Two characteristic notes need to be pointed out: Frequently the provinces do not have sufficient or prepared personnel for formation. Also the formation in the humanities of the candidates who come to the seminary is often incomplete. This obliges the formators to spend more energy in responding to this lack of preparation. The interchange of personnel, even if only for a time, would be beneficial to the provinces and in the long run to the congregation. It frequently happens that where the number of candidates grows, the lack of formation personnel is felt.

### *The Major Seminary*

In this area we make reference to the provinces of Madagascar, Ethiopia, Zaire and the vice-provinces of St. Justin de Jacobis and Mozambique. We also include the region of Nigeria, dependent on the Irish Province, and the mission of Cameroon, which is the responsibility of the Province of Paris.

The above-mentioned provinces or vice-provinces do not have their own centers of theological studies. They send their students either to diocesan seminaries or intercongregational theological institutes.

None of the above-mentioned provinces has received responsibility at this time for a major seminary in any of the numerous dioceses of the African continent. Nonetheless, the missionaries of the Congregation continue to collaborate in the spiritual and academic formation of candidates for the priesthood in Africa. According to approximate calculations seventeen confreres are employed in formation work and, in particular, in teaching at study centers, which the philosophy-theology students of the Congregation also attend.

In the same way as in Europe each and every one of the provinces and vice-provinces of Africa has a center of studies, or, as some prefer to call it, a theologate. The formative community usually is made up of formators and students. At times the center of studies is attached to a house of the province.

In the last few years, the political and social situation of Zaire set back an attempt, proposed by the superior general, of erecting in that country an inter-provincial center of formation for all of the provinces of Africa. On the other hand, the Mexican Province is responsible for a minor seminary in the Diocese of Xai-Xai, in Mozambique, and the Province of

St. Louis, U.S.A., since 1980 has been in charge of the minor seminary of Nyeri, in Kenya.

**c. Asia and Australia**

We refer in the following section to the provinces of India, Indonesia, the Philippines, China and Australia.

*Internal Seminary*

Each province, except Taiwan, has its own internal seminary. Despite considerable distances, two provinces collaborate in this field of the formation of our seminarians. A small number of seminarians from Indonesia goes each year to the internal seminary of the Philippines; the rest make their seminary in their own country. There is a sustained growth in the number of seminarians in Indonesia and India; a more moderate growth in the Philippines and a certain continuity with regard to the recent past in Australia. This province forms its seminarians in the internal seminary located in the Fiji Islands and, sometimes, in Australia. Taiwan does not have any vocations at the moment and, therefore, has no structures for formation.

Just as in the provinces of other latitudes the Ratio Formationis is the point of reference for formators and students.

*Major Seminary*

The Province of Indonesia has, together with two religious congregations, a center of philosophical-theological studies. Besides our own students and those which belong to the two participating congregations, seminarians from nine dioceses participate. The province has also taken charge of a diocesan minor seminary.

The Province of India maintains its own theologate in Orissa in which the courses of the basic institutional cycle are given. In Pune, a second theologate of the province, the students take classes at the diocesan seminary.

The Province of the Philippines, besides having assumed responsibility for the theology department in the diocesan seminary of Cebu, has its own major seminary in Manila. The Australian Province sends its students to either diocesan or inter-congregational centers. The contribution of the confreres of this province to the formation of the future priests of the Fiji Islands is considerable.

According to the available statistics, a total of twenty-four missionaries of the Congregation collaborate in the academic formation of diocesan seminarians and the students of the Congregation of the Mission.

The new international mission, recently created by the superior general in the Solomon Islands, has taken charge of an inter-diocesan major seminary.

#### **d. Latin America**

##### *The Internal Seminary*

Generally each province has had its own internal seminary until now. Nevertheless, in this wide zone of the American continent the tendency toward inter-provincial collaboration has been felt. In solidarity the following groups of provinces are responsible for an internal seminary: Peru, Argentina and Chile; Fortaleza and Curitiba, with the probable participation of Rio de Janeiro; Puerto Rico, to whose seminary go the seminarians from Cuba; there is also an interprovincial seminary for Central America and Philadelphia located in Panama. In Central America steps are being taken for collaboration with regard to the formation of the seminarians for the other provinces and vice-provinces which are present in some way in that region. These are, besides those already named, Costa Rica, Barcelona and Saragossa. By reaching an agreement, all would benefit, since at times sufficient formators are not available and, moreover, the number of seminarians for each province is very small. The Provinces of Ecuador and Venezuela, beginning with the course for 1995-1996, have begun mutual collaboration, erecting the inter-provincial internal seminary in Ecuador.

There is no uniformity with regard to age or level of preparation of the candidates when they enter the internal seminary. In some provinces they enter the seminary when they have finished philosophy, in others once they have finished their intermediate studies required to enter the university.

Some of the Latin American provinces continue to keep the minor seminary or, sometimes, the postulancy, which boys of at least seventeen years of age enter. This is a first experience of community life. Such is the case in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, Venezuela, Peru and Chile. In a similar situation are the provinces of Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro and Ecuador. The Province of Colombia continues to maintain an apostolic school.

The tendency, although different in each place, is towards the gradual increase in the number of candidates.

With some frequency the preparation of the formation personnel has been improvised, above all with regard to knowledge of Vincentian spirituality. The help of the provinces which are rich in well-prepared personnel to those who have none is extremely urgent at the present moment.

##### *Major Seminary*

The Latin American provinces send their candidates to academic centers run by others. Three provinces are the exception. Colombia has a center for philosophical studies and another for theological studies under its own care. The province of Ecuador continues to maintain its own center of studies in which the academic courses of the basic institutional cycle are taught. The Province of Curitiba has a center of philosophical studies in which teachers from other congregations collaborate and to which students from the other provinces go.

The province of Colombia is responsible for five diocesan seminaries in Colombia and another in Bolivia. The other provinces have given up this ministry.

In Latin America twenty-two confreres hold the office of professor in formation centers for future priests. To this figure we have to add a larger number of confreres, about forty, from the Province of Colombia, dedicated to the formation of aspirants to the priesthood.

**e. The United States of America**

*The Internal Seminary*

The five provinces, due to the reduced number of candidates, decided to erect an inter-provincial seminary. The results have been favorable. Several confreres collaborate with the director of the seminary and, in particular, in teaching the subjects given during the seminary year. Normally the candidates who enter the seminary have a considerable level of academic and human maturity.

*The Major Seminary*

The Provinces send their own students to centers of study, not owned by the Congregation.

Seventeen confreres are formators or professors in teaching centers on priestly formation. Special mention goes to Camarillo Seminary, in the diocese of Los Angeles. Five missionaries of the Congregation are professors and formators in the Theologate and two in the College.

## **Conclusions**

Presently the formation imparted in the internal seminary of the Congregation follows the lines of action marked out in the Ratio Formationis and, in particular, in what is most specifically Vincentian spirituality. Due to the present Ratio Formationis the formation of the seminarians from the different provinces and geographic areas coincides in the fundamental, without detriment to the necessary inculturation in the different places.

## **Interprovincial Collaboration**

The number of provinces which are coming together to share the responsibility for a common internal seminary is gradually growing. The improvisation of the formators is notable. Frequently they do not have the opportunity or the necessary means to prepare themselves sufficiently to competently exercise this ministry. The lack of formators is notable in the provinces in which the number of aspirants is growing. This means a lack which has negative consequences in the long run and which is not easily remedied. It would be desirable that the provinces find ways to help each other by interchanging formation personnel.

Given the fact that presently the groups of seminarians are small in numbers, the problems of large groups have been overcome, without, on the other hand, having resolved satisfactorily the deficiencies which come from having a small group, sometime minuscule, of

seminarians.

Since it cannot be avoided in these times, the academic preparation of the candidates who enter the seminary is characterized by diversity, according to the country and depending on the cultural levels and the local legislation with regard to secondary studies. The provinces agree on demanding that the students who enter the seminary be older and have greater human maturity and sufficient experience of community life.

### **The Major Seminary**

The disappearance of the classical formation structures in the centers of study or major seminaries of the Congregation, not replaced with new or better structures, brought with it, during the decades immediately after the council and even in the recent past, a clear disorientation. In some latitudes the effects are still being felt.

At present there is more stability and serenity in everything which concerns formation. After a situation characterized by rapid change, often not well discerned, we have passed to a situation of creative pause, which is generally a characteristic of the present ecclesial moment.

The formation which the students of the Congregation in the basic institutional cycle receive is usually adapted to what is taught in the formation centers of the local and universal Church. In general terms the Congregation has incorporated into the formation project of its own students the guidelines of Vatican II, the later orientations of the Holy See and the Episcopal Conferences and, of course, the special features of its own Vincentian tradition. Today the Vincentian dimension of formation, as it is spelled out in the Constitutions and the Ratio Formationis for the Major Seminary, and also the document Brothers for the Mission and the respective provincial formation plans, offers guarantees of authenticity to both formation personnel and students. These documents have had favorable effects in the provinces. They have increased congregational unity in the fundamental and, at the same time, have left freedom to cultivate a diversity to the local culture.

Except for a small group of provinces, all of the others have entrusted the academic formation of their candidates to professors and institutions not belonging to the Vincentian Community. The positive results are clear. The students of the Congregation have followed the practice adopted by the majority of religious orders and congregations. Moreover the possibly impoverishing isolation, which surely would have occurred if the students had remained enclosed in their own domestic environment, has been overcome.

But, some negative aspects have resulted from this way of acting. The little or no participation by the professors of the Congregation in the centers which their own students attend carries with it a real and progressive distance between the dynamic of the academic centers and the formation personnel. Another negative element affects the Congregation itself. The decline in the ministry of priestly formation, with the reduced responsibility of the provinces for diocesan seminaries and the reduced number of their own centers of studies, might bring, and in fact does bring, an impoverishment in the specialized academic formation of the missionaries. Due to a lack of incentive, in practice the provinces probably will not consider it opportune that a group of confreres specialize in the theological disciplines.

## **Formation of the Brothers**

Certain anachronisms which came from the past have been corrected in the formation of the brothers. In the Constitutions the Brother is to be equal in everything to the clerics, except in what derives from priestly orders. In some provinces either the growth or the reduction in numbers of lay vocations in the Congregation is equal to the growth or reduction of priestly vocations. In the Congregation as a whole the reduction in the number of brothers is greater than that of the clerics.

The formation of the Brothers in the internal seminary is similar to that of the aspirants to the priesthood. Usually they receive sufficient theological formation either in theological faculties or in school of theology for the laity. The provinces have also looked for ways for the brothers to achieve enough professional training. The variety of offices and ministries that the brothers undertake today has widened. It includes manual labor, domestic service, administration, teaching and pastoral ministry in its many diverse aspects.

Despite what has been said above, two elements with regard to the brothers have not been satisfactorily resolved: the formation after the internal seminary and the integration of the brother in a clerical society. Lately one hears voices favorable to the elaboration of a Ratio Formationis for the brothers.

Without forgetting to look towards the future, we should read with attention the pages which St. Vincent and many other confreres wrote in the past about the ministry of the formation of diocesan priests and, our own members. It will serve as a help and a guarantee for entering the Twenty-first Century on solid footing.

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