

Ratio Formationis Presentation to Visitors

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SESSION 1: *Goals and Objectives of Vincentian Formation*

I thank Father Stanislav Zontak for his kind and very clear introduction to our sessions concerning the *Ratio Formationis*. I thank him for his careful and attentive assistance to me and to the Commission entrusted with the Revision of the *Ratio*. We can offer you this material today here at the Visitors' Meeting due to his assistance to us. I invite you to help us move to the final draft which we hope to eventually present to the General Council. There are five areas about which I would appreciate your reflection and input.

The five areas we will treat at this meeting are all drawn from issues considered in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 8. These are areas where the cultural diversity manifest in our provinces must be most carefully recognized and honored. The *Ratio Formationis* seeks to foster the unity of the community which exists only in a diversity of cultures, is enriched by that diversity, and must foster the development of the Vincentian charism within those cultures. Within each one's culture, the various provinces as well as the Congregation as a whole can learn from the other cultures and walk the paths of ongoing formation together. So, I invite your reflections so that we, on the Commission for the revision of the *Ratio*, can be sure that we have understood adequately the gifts, the needs, and the challenges which exist in each of your provinces.

The theme of this session revolves around "A Consideration of the Goals and Objectives of Formation and Consideration of the Characteristics of Vincentian formation". You will need to refer to the draft of the *Ratio*, Ch. 1, pp. 3-7, 19-23. Please treat each of these two questions:

- Do you agree with these goals as the basic goals of every stage of formation? (Would you add to or delete any of these goals?)
- Do you agree with the characteristics of the process of formation? (Would you add to or delete any of these characteristics?)

SESSION 2: *Vocation Ministry*

The work of this second session is more focused. I ask you to help us by focusing on two areas of formation: first, the goals and objectives of Vocation Ministry; and, the criteria which a candidate must meet in order to be accepted into a house of pre-internal seminary formation.

Both concern the early stages of bringing young men into the Congregation. Because these concern early stages, there is considerable need for careful screening of candidates even as we strive to reach out broadly in inviting persons to consider a calling to the Congregation. Offering criteria which will help us to address these needs effectively becomes more difficult when we begin to consider the diversity of the cultures in which we live and labor.

Differing elements of Christian maturity may be presumed in one culture but not presumed in another; but no culture can presume all elements of Christian maturity in those who inquire about a vocation. What we have sought to present in these two sections are some sound avenues of recruitment and sound criteria for the selection of candidates which can serve in every culture. But we would be significantly helped by your own reflections on what we propose. I would ask that you refer to Documents 1 and 2, pp. 1-8. Please consider these two questions:

- Do you agree with the goals of vocation ministry as stated? As you lead the confreres in your province, do you think these goals are too demanding, or too lenient, or helpful and appropriate?
- Do you agree with the profile of a man acceptable for admission and the criteria for accepting a candidate into a house of formation in your province? (What would you add or delete, if anything from this profile and criteria?)

SESSION 3: *Pre-Internal and Internal Seminary Formation*

This third session focuses on consideration of the goals and objectives of Pre-Internal Seminary Formation and a consideration of criteria a candidate must meet to be accepted into the Internal Seminary. The reason for our presentation in this section of the *Ratio* is twofold: first, it will enable us to formulate guidelines for pre-internal seminary formation truly appropriate and effective for beginners regardless of their cultural background; second, it will help us fine-tune the criteria for entrance into the Internal Seminary, so that we do not admit persons who are not ready for the Internal Seminary. To facilitate discussion in this session, refer to Documents 3 and 4, pp. 9-14. In the light of these two documents, please consider these two questions:

- Do you agree with the goals of Pre-Internal Seminary Formation as stated? As you lead the confreres in your province, do you think these goals are too demanding, too lenient, or helpful and appropriate?
- Do you agree with the profile of a man acceptable for admission and the criteria for accepting a candidate into the Internal Seminary in your province? What would you add or delete, if anything from this profile and these criteria?

SESSION 4: *Ongoing Formation*

Our focus for this session is consideration of the goals and objectives of Ongoing Formation. A reason to reflect upon this area and to offer some suggestions is because this is an area of formation which has received the least attention in the past. As a result, it will be most helpful to learn concretely what different provinces of the Congregation actually think and do in this area. To facilitate your discussion in this session, please refer to *Constitutions* articles 12.6 and 81. In the light of these articles, please consider these four questions:

- How would you distinguish ongoing formation from ongoing education for confreres of your province?
- What would you name as the goal or goals of ongoing formation as you view your province?
- Does your province have a “Director of Ongoing Formation”?
- In what ways does your province seek to support confreres in their efforts at ongoing education and ongoing formation?

SESSION 5

This is our last session for the *Ratio Formationis*, as we consider the ‘Profile of a Formator’ and ways of ‘forming the formators’. Admittedly, provinces vary a great deal in ways they select persons for formation ministry and how they prepare confreres for that ministry. This may be the most important of all the areas of the Ratio, because a program of formation is only as good as the persons who direct it. What we seek here as we share our reflections is making an effort to underscore the importance of formation ministry. We are concerned with encouraging provinces to support confreres in this ministry with training to enable them to do their work effectively. To facilitate your discussion in this session, please refer to Ch. 1, pp. 10-13. In the light of this material, please consider these three questions:

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- Do you agree with the profile of a formator as stated in this draft of Chapter 1? (Would you add or delete any of these characteristics from the profile as you think of the confreres and the ministry of formation in your province?)
 - What do you do in your province to support the formation of formators?
 - What do you think needs to be done for the formation of formators beyond what you already do in your province?