***GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE RATIO FORMATIONIS,***

***ACTUALIZED IN 2020***

**The first question that should be addressed when speaking about the *Ratio Formationis* is, what is a *Ratio*? The word *ratio* comes from Latin and means *reason*, *rational.* What a *Ratio Formationis* is, in essence, are the values and principles that should be the foundation for formation. From this fundamental document of values and principles, the particular *Ratio* (that is, of the Congregation´s Units and Conferences) are formulated. Also formulated from the basic *Ratio* are the directories, which correspond to the structures adopted by the Units and Conferences for formation, and the Programs, which are the actual day by day, concrete proposal for the formation and living out of the values and principles articulated in the Ratio.**

**Before the actualization recently published of the *Ratio*, the Congregation´s formation was guided by the 2003 *Ratio* *Formationis Generalis*. The 1991 General Chapter mandated the 2003 *Ratio* because it was seen that there was some dispersion, a lack of continuity and cohesion in the actual *Ratio* and formation. Before 2003 there were four *Ratio*: Brothers, Novitiate, Clerics, and Continued Formation.**

**It was not until 12 years later that the 2003 *Ratio Formationis Generalis* was completed and approved by the General Government.**

**In 2016, 25th General Chapter asked that an evaluation of the formation programs be done by the Units and the Conferences.**

**When the General Secretariat of Formation, over two years ago, reflected on this decision, we saw that any evaluation would need a reference point, and logically, that reference should be the *Ratio,* and it had to be updated. Since 2003, among other influences, the Congregation had celebrated two General Chapters, the General Government in 2015 had published the decree of formation which established for us the vocabulary and elements of the different stages of formation and thirdly, the Vatican had published several very important documents relating to formation and Religious Life, including the results of different Synods of Bishops.**

**The need for a new *Ratio* was also seen from the perspective of Restructuring and Reconfiguration.**

**Both Restructuring and Reconfiguration take their motivation and are energized from fidelity to the Redemptorist Mission and Charism.**

**It is generally agreed that the term restructuring is not the best, but it is functional within our understanding of including conversion and the faithfulness to our Charism. The concept and values of restructuring appear in our Constitutions, for example, Constitution # 96, when speaking of adaptations to our apostolic necessities.**

**Reconfiguration has more to do with the structures (size, geographic areas, etc.) of our Units. As with restructuring, renewed configuration is reflected, for example, in Constitution 107. From the concern for Mission, the reconfiguration of Units *with the consequent reconfiguration of Formation programs* (the reason why we mention this here), is affecting the number and size of Provinces, vice-Provinces, Regions and Missions. With these reductions, there also comes the reduction of Councils, Secretariats, Commissions, etc., and so the releasing of more men for Mission. Other considerations have led to the logic of reconfiguration, namely, the diminishment of our numbers, the necessary closing of Missions, although regarded as authentical within our missionary Charism and even the sale of the Congregation´s heritage, for example, properties.**

**An interesting observation with regards to this actualized *Ratio* is the presentation right at the beginning of the Profile of the Redemptorist Confrere shaped by the new vision of restructuring. The Profile is again presented towards the end of the Ratio as part of the Decree of 2015 by the General Government on Formation.**

**The first point of the Profile is the participation in common novitiate programs of the Units belonging to the same Conference, which also promotes interculturality. In general, this is going well within the whole Congregation. However, some exceptions have had to be made because of special circumstances, including the restrictions on travel and the obtaining of visas to some countries. What we have seen is that the common Conference novitiates create long-lasting relationships and bonds between confreres from different Units, that is, interculturality and unity for us as a Congregation is fostered. Where there is common preparation for final vows programs in the Conferences, these relationships and bonds are strengthened with the coming together again of the confrere candidates. These strong relationships influence the overall Mission, identity, and unity of the Congregation.**

**Although the confrere will continue to learn about his own Unit and the particular apostolates of his native reality, he will be exposed to the constant renewal and restructuring process and history of the whole Congregation.**

**The confrere´s commitment, relationship, and identity will be understood as beyond that to his own particular Unit, but rather to the whole Congregation. With this global missionary consciousness, he will be sensitive to the phenomenon of the movement of peoples. He will also be exposed to the variety of Mission pastoral, for example, the ministry of our Redemptorist Shrines.**

**This experience of belonging and participating in the Mission of a worldwide Congregation should awaken in the confrere alertness to the signs of the times and the making of vital apostolic decisions that respond ever anew to our call, as Redemptorists, to Mission.**

**For our reflections, we would like to propose the following questions:**

1. **In light of the evaluation of the formation programs asked for by the 25th General Chapter, do you think that a justified starting point is the Updated *Ratio Formationis* of 2020, that is, the document that presents the principles and values that guide formation? Please explain?**
2. **Concretely, how have Restructuring and Reconfiguration influenced formation in your Conference?**
3. **What should we as a Congregation do to continue to strengthen our formation programs for the sake of “truly preparing future Redemptorist for the mission of the Congregation as presented in the priorities of the Conference” (Decision, # 30, 25th General Chapter).**

**Finally, we refer our readers to the Formation webpage.**

**The reference is: www.cssr.news/formation/**

**Besides helpful documents, this webpage offers resources envisioned to help our formators in their most important ministry.**