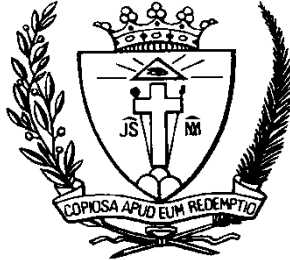


CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER



1. DECREE ON FORMATION

Prot. N. 0000 117/2015

DECISIONS OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING INITIAL FORMATION

VOCATION PROMOTION

The General Government establishes the second Sunday of November as an annual day for the promotion of the Redemptorist Missionary Vocation throughout the Congregation.
Effective 2015.

FORMATION PRIOR TO NOVITIATE

The General Government mandates that before beginning Novitiate, the candidate must have lived in a formation community and followed a formation program for at least two years.
Effective 2016.

NOVITIATE

1. All Novitiates will be Interprovincial Novitiates. Some of these Interprovincial Novitiates (proposed by the Conference and approved by the General Government) will be Conference Novitiates. Boards will be created among the Units to direct the Interprovincial Novitiate. The Conference Coordinator will ordinarily be a member of the Board.
 2. Every Unit must participate in an Interprovincial Novitiate Board even if it does not have novices in an Interprovincial Novitiate.
- Effective 2016.

BROTHERS FORMATION

The initial formation of Brothers must include a period of no less than three years after first profession in a formation program in a formation community.
Effective 2016.

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE STAGE

The General Government mandates that the Pastoral Experience Stage is part of initial formation for the entire Congregation. The Pastoral Experience Stage will be done during the period in which the confrere is in Temporary Vows and will be one continuous period of no less than six months.
Effective 2016.

PREPARATION FOR FINAL VOWS

The preparation for perpetual profession will last for at least one month (GS. 075), in addition to the canonically required eight-day retreat. The program will be for those confreres who have discerned their commitment to the Congregation, applied for perpetual profession and have been accepted. In so far as possible, Preparation for Final Vows must take place at a Conference level.
Effective 2016.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERPROVINCIAL FORMATION

The General Government recommends that at least one year of formation will be done outside of the Unit of origin and in so far as possible outside of the country.
Effective 2016 for those beginning the formation process.

Given in Rome, on April 10, 2015.

Michael Brell, C.S.R.

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Superior General

Brendan J. Kelly, C.S.R.

.....
Secretary General

Seal of the Congregation

To the Very Rev. Provincial Superiors,
Vice-Provincial Superiors
and Regional Superiors

1. LETTER FROM FATHER GENERAL

Rome, April 12, 2015
Prot. #0000 117/2015

Dear Confreres,

The Lord is risen! Alleluia!

As we celebrate the great feast of Easter, and the promise of life to the full which is the gift of the Risen Lord through the action of the Holy Spirit, we also renew our call to be “signs and witnesses before people of the power of his resurrection, proclaiming the new and eternal life” (c. 51).

With this letter, I am sending you some Decisions of the General Government with regards to Formation. These Decisions are the result of a long and careful process of consultation, dialogue, and prayerful reflection. In 2011, the General Secretariat for Formation began a reflection on the implications of the Decisions of the XXIV General Chapter for initial formation. This reflection took into account:

- The Process of Restructuring, the Conferences and the Coordinator;
- The “Profile of the Redemptorist Confrere shaped by this New Vision” (Decisions of the XXIV General Chapter 6.12 – 6.17);
- The challenges facing initial formation in the Congregation today, and especially the challenges of common, interprovincial formation projects.

As a result of this process of reflection and dialogue, especially with the General Council and the Coordinators, the General Secretariat for Formation recommended certain decisions about common formation especially with regards to the Novitiate, the Pastoral Experience Stage (during temporary profession), and the Preparation for Final Vows. They also recommended some other decisions which touch especially on preparation for novitiate, and the formation of Brothers. These proposed decisions were presented to the General Council, and subsequently to the Coordinators, the Assemblies of the Conferences, and Formators throughout the Congregation. The very helpful feedback from this consultation and dialogue modified the proposed decisions presented to the General Council for voting in September 2014.

With these Decisions, the General Secretariat for Formation has also included a letter to explain some of the reasons and implications of them. I hope that this document will also be helpful. As you will notice, the first decision was already promulgated – that the second Sunday of November will be an annual day for the promotion of the Redemptorist Missionary Vocation throughout the Congregation.

Except for Brothers formation and the Pastoral Experience Stage, the General Secretariat for Formation did not focus at this time on the entire period of initial formation from First Profession to Final Vows, nor on the period of Transition to Ministry, nor on ongoing or Continuing Formation. This does not mean to diminish their importance. These present Decisions should be taken as an initial response to the challenges of initial formation today. Further reflection and consultation will lead to further decisions when the time is right.

However, we are aware that there are (Vice) Provinces and Regions which need to reflect especially on their ability to offer a good, solid formation program for those in temporary vows, whether clerical students or brothers. Can they prepare and appoint a team of Formators in a healthy formation community? Can they offer accompaniment and formation which addresses all five dimensions in the *Ratio Formationis* (2003) – human, spiritual, community, academic and pastoral? If they cannot, then it is urgent that they collaborate with other Units in order to provide the best possible initial formation for all our members in temporary vows.

Initial Formation is essential for the mission of the Congregation: “The vitality with which the Congregation pursues its apostolic mission depends on the number and quality of the candidates” (c. 79. “The aim of formation for both candidates and members is to lead them to such a degree of human and Christian maturity that, with the help of God’s grace, they will be able to dedicate themselves intelligently, willingly and wholeheartedly to the service of the missionary Church in Redemptorist community life, in order to preach the Gospel to the poor.” (C. 78)

It is my fervent hope that these Decisions will help us to face the challenges of initial formation today with hope and courage. May God who continues to call apostles to follow Jesus the Redeemer as he proclaims the Gospel to the abandoned, especially the poor, form all of us more and more into the image of his Son. May Mary, the first disciple and our Mother of Perpetual Help, accompany us and teach us to become ‘missionary disciples’.

May the blessings of this Easter Season fill us with the joy of the Gospel, and the courage of the apostles.

Your brother in the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R." in a cursive script.

Michael Brehl, C.Ss.R.
Superior General

2. RATIONALE FOR AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING INITIAL FORMATION

“All the members share responsibility in the work of formation. They share it not only for those who are beginning life in the Congregation, but for all the confreres. For the whole Congregation is continually in process of formation and development, to be ready to meet the needs of the people to whom its members preach the Gospel.” (Const. 82)

XXIV GENERAL CHAPTER (2009) A PROFILE OF THE REDEMPTORIST CONFRERE SHAPED BY THIS NEW VISION

6.12. The principles of restructuring assure the continuity of our fundamental identity and mission as Redemptorists in the Church and in the world. At the same time, they call for new realities and structures that would give fresh impetus to that mission and identity.

6.13. This is a possible profile of a confrere in a restructured Congregation.

6.14. This confrere would participate in a novitiate program of various Units, usually belonging to the same Conference. He would interact with confreres from other countries, cultures, and maybe even languages.

6.15. During his initial formation he would learn about the charism of the Congregation and the special gifts and apostolates of his own Unit. He would understand from our history that constant renewal and restructuring have been vital for the continuity and continuation of our mission.

6.16. When he makes his vows, his commitment will be to the whole Congregation and not simply to a particular Unit. This commitment will be given practical expression in the Unit and the Conference to which he belongs. He will need to have a wider grasp of the changing circumstances, human realities and apostolic priorities not only of his Unit but of the entire Conference to which his Unit belongs. He will, for example, have to learn about the phenomenon of migrants within the geographic area of his Conference. He will, to give another example, be able to participate in the ministry of Redemptorist shrines within his Conference, a ministry growing in importance within the modern phenomenon of popular religious devotion.

6.17. Above all, he will know that he belongs to and willingly participates in the mission of a worldwide Congregation that takes seriously the challenge of being alert to the signs of the times and making vital apostolic decisions that respond ever anew to our call to mission.

STAGES OF FORMATION

“Because of the diversity within the Congregation there is at present no common and precise set of terms to describe the different stages of formation. Different terms are used among the various Units of the Congregation; and again, identical terms are used with different meanings in different Units. Moreover, the educational system of each region uses different words to describe the educational process leading from the lower to the higher phases.” (Ratio Formationis n° 10)

Our current reality of formation in the Congregation is one in which we are moving toward common formation, meaning, greater collaboration among Units. It is also the reality that various Units are still able to hold on to their long standing tradition of formation and therefore, have developed different stages to respond to their needs. It may be the case that there needs to be a revision of these formation programs to determine whether they are in fact meeting the needs of formation today.

In order to promote greater solidarity and to advance the work of common formation, we propose the following stages as a way of providing the Congregation with a common vocabulary regarding formation:

- 1. *Vocation Promotion and Accompaniment.***
- 2. *Formation Prior to Novitiate. [Candidate]***
- 3. *Novitiate. [Novice]***
- 4. *Period from First Profession to Final Vows. [Temporarily professed]***
- 5. *Pastoral Experience Stage during temporary profession.***
- 6. *Preparation for Final Vows.***
- 7. *Transition to Ministry.***
- 8. *Continuing Formation: Personal, Community, Unit, levels, and Specialization for the mission.***

Each Unit is free to have substages where necessary within the proposed stages in order to accommodate their reality, while maintaining the fundamental aspects of each stage.

VOCATION PROMOTION

The vitality with which the Congregation pursues its apostolic mission depends on the number and quality of the candidates who seek admission to the Redemptorist community. For that reason, all the confreres, out of love and appreciation for their own vocation, should zealously engage in the apostolate of fostering vocations to the Congregation. (Const. 79)

Decision: The General Government establishes the second Sunday of November as an annual day for the promotion of the Redemptorist Missionary Vocation throughout the Congregation. Effective 2015.

- We are aware that Vocation Promotion is the responsibility of each and every confrere, of each community and each Unit as well as those directly responsible for that ministry.
- In many countries, the Religious Sisters and Lay Missionaries are also deeply committed to promoting vocations to this charism, which belongs to us all.
- The best way to pass on and to promote vocations to the charism is through living authentically our Constitutions and Statutes, thus becoming authentic Redemptorist Missionaries, “as one missionary body” (Const. 2) together with “the most abandoned especially the poor” (Const. 1).
- This decision of the General Government is geared toward achieving the goal of keeping confreres and collaborators constantly aware of the need for vocation promotion and accompaniment of candidates interested in becoming Redemptorists.

FORMATION PRIOR TO NOVITIATE

Decision: The General Government mandates that before beginning Novitiate, the candidate must have lived in a formation community and followed a formation program for at least two years. Effective 2016.

- This stage of formation needs to follow a definite program of formation in the Redemptorist charism, as determined by the *Ratio Formationis 2003*, within a Redemptorist formation community, which will fulfill the requirements for an interprovincial novitiate.
- In the Congregation there exists different names and various stages prior to Novitiate for example Aspirancy, Propedeutic, Postulancy, Pre Novitiate etc.
- In consultation with the Conference, Units can determine the duration of this “Prior to Novitiate stage” but it cannot be less than two years.
- Some topics to be considered in developing programs of formation for this level are: getting to know and appreciate the Redemptorists, spirituality, prayer, ecclesiology from the perspective of Vatican Council II, community life, psycho affective development, etc.
- Programs for this level of formation should include study of the language skills and cultural sensitivity necessary to prepare candidates to participate in the interprovincial novitiate.
- Units are encouraged to have this stage of formation locally. Each Unit should take this opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to forming new members and as a sign of solidarity with the Conference or Interprovincial efforts at formation.
- If a Unit is unable to develop and sustain an adequate program of formation prior to novitiate, it will be advised by the General Government to collaborate with another Unit or participate in a Conference program of formation.

NOVITIATE

“It is the function of the general government to decide on the erection of the novitiate, and designate by a written decree some house of the Congregation where it will be situated; it defines the program of formation for the novitiate and determines other matters in accordance with the common law and the general statutes.” (Const. 86. 1°)

“This confrere would participate in a novitiate program of various Units, usually belonging to the same Conference.” (Profile new Redemptorist n° 6.14)

Decision:

1. All Novitiates will be Interprovincial Novitiates. Some of these Interprovincial Novitiates (proposed by the Conference and approved by the General Government) will be Conference Novitiates. Boards will be created among the Units to direct the Interprovincial Novitiate. The Conference Coordinator will ordinarily be a member of the Board.

2. Every Unit must participate in an Interprovincial Novitiate Board even if it does not have novices in an Interprovincial Novitiate. Effective 2016.

- Renewed structures for mission require the General Government to direct, with renewed vigor, the establishment of novitiates and to promote the collaboration

among the Units in the Conferences. Consulting the Conferences, the General Government will determine the number of novitiates in the worldwide Congregation, what languages they are conducted in and their locations.

- Care must be taken in the creation of the Boards in order to make the novitiates true collaborations among the Units. The Coordinator's participation on the novitiate board will be the key to creating a deeper sense of solidarity. To achieve this goal, Interprovincial Novitiates, which already have a Board of directors, should update their *Ratio*/Directory to include the Coordinator as a member of the Board if he is presently not a member.
- Some of the functions of Novitiate Boards are: writing Directories with guidelines for the selection of Novice Directors (formation team), approve *Ratio* outlining the program of formation, approve Contracts or Memoranda of Understanding to guarantee participation and good faith among the Units.
- Novitiate *Ratio* should include the basic requirements for entrance into the Novitiate, Curriculum, time in pre-novitiate, necessary language skills etc.
- Boards should also consider the time of preparation required before the canonical start of the novitiate, taking into consideration the decision regarding the "Prior to Novitiate" stage.
- To be a truly collaborative effort, all Units need to participate in Interprovincial Novitiate Boards even if they presently have an independent Novitiate within their Unit.
- The *Ratio*/Directory of the Interprovincial Novitiate will make provisions for Units, determining which Units have a vote and which don't. The Directory should also attempt to define the degree of participation of each Unit.
- Novitiate Boards need to think through financial issues thoroughly. Participating Units, as an expression of solidarity, offer support to the Novitiate, even if a Unit does not have novices in a given year.
- The General Government took this decision understanding that some Units would require more time to comply. In these cases, the Unit must request an exemption from the Superior General indicating the reasons, which warrant the exemption.

BROTHERS FORMATION

"As Redemptorist missionaries the Brothers must receive a proper formation to prepare them to live their apostolic mission and their religious consecration effectively.

This time must be of sufficient duration to allow for the full implementation of the proposals in the Ratio for formation..., Until their Perpetual Profession, the Brothers are to be considered in formation which is the primary purpose of this period. During these years the Brothers in temporary vows must remain together, under the guidance of a Prefect and in a formation community which offers them the possibility of living a truly religious life. Their principal service to the Congregation and to the Church during this time is their formation which is preparing them to become missionaries according to their way of life and for such services as the Congregation will require of them after their Perpetual Profession."

(Letter Ratio Formationis for Brothers Fr. Juan M. Lasso de la Vega 1996)

Decision: The initial formation of Brothers must include a period of no less than three years after First Profession in a formation program in a formation community. Effective 2016.

- It is a common practice in the Congregation for Brothers to be sent to a community immediately after First Profession.
- With this decision the General Government is asking for a more adequate formation for Brothers up to Final Vows.
- Vocation promotion in every Unit will focus on recruiting prospective candidates to the Redemptorist life either as Clerics or Brothers. Vocation promotion material whether they are pamphlets, videos, IT presentations, talks to groups of youth/young adults, or one-on-one, whatever form this vocation promotion takes, will focus on presenting the Redemptorists first as disciples who respond to a call to follow Christ the Redeemer, to preach the Good News to the poor and most abandoned through living the consecrated life and second, as Clerics or Brothers. Vocation promotion therefore will be focused more on becoming a Redemptorist.
- During the Prior to Novitiate Stage, both Cleric and Brother candidates follow the same program of formation in all Dimensions except for the Academic/Professional Dimension whose contents may be different for the Brother candidates. The overriding character which defines this stage is its focus on accompanying men in their initial experience of Redemptorist Apostolic Life.
- Novitiate will be the same for all Candidates.
- During the first profession to final profession stage, a definite program of study geared toward qualification for specialization in a field compatible with Redemptorist apostolate and within the confrere's competence will be the focus of the Academic/Professional Dimension.
- The Temporary Professed Brother will live in a formation community and be properly accompanied.

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE STAGE

“The apostolic purpose of the Congregation must inspire and penetrate the whole formation process of its members.” (Const. 77)

“The pastoral orientation of the whole course of training is a distinctive feature of missionary formation.” (G.S. 058)

“It is highly recommended that candidates, prior to final profession, have a well-planned supervised one-year pastoral experience.” (Ratio Formationis n° 48)

“When he makes his vows, his commitment will be to the whole Congregation and not simply to a particular Unit. This commitment will be given practical expression in the Unit and the Conference to which he belongs. He will need to have a wider grasp of the changing circumstances, human realities and apostolic priorities not only of his Unit but of the entire Conference to which his Unit belongs. He will, for example, have to learn about the phenomenon of migrants within the geographic area of his Conference. He will, to give another example, be able to participate in the ministry of Redemptorist shrines within his Conference, a ministry growing in importance within the modern phenomenon of popular religious devotion.” (Profile new Redemptorist n° 6.16)

Decision: The General Government mandates that the Pastoral Experience Stage is part of initial formation for the entire Congregation. The Pastoral Experience Stage will be done during the period in which the confrere is in Temporary Vows and will be one continuous period of no less than six months. Effective 2016

- The need for sound pastoral experience during initial formation is echoed in our Constitutions and Statutes, in the current *Ratio Formationis* and in the deliberations and decisions of the XXIV General Chapter.
- In some Units, Pastoral Experience is done throughout the period of initial formation and sometimes immediately after final vows
- The goal of this decision from the General Government is to establish the appropriate location within the program of initial formation for this stage. This stage is not to be confused with pastoral work during Transition to Ministry or pastoral immersion after ordination.
- The General Government believes that this stage of formation presents an excellent opportunity for Conference collaboration. It could allow the Temporary Professed the chance to experience new initiatives, which have grown out of the Conference priorities. It might even serve as a way in which the Conferences animate efforts at apostolic collaboration in the Conferences.
- If the Pastoral Experience Stage becomes a common initiative of the Conference, the Conference Secretariat for Formation will be able to propose the principles governing the fulfilment of that stage, including its duration, which must not be less than that stipulated in the decision, apostolic experiences and other elements such as clear guidelines on appropriate accompaniment and a process of evaluation.
- The Pastoral Experience Stage provides an ideal opportunity for confreres in initial formation to be assigned to a mission outside of their Unit or country.
- This is a special, unique stage of Initial Formation during which the Temporary Professed will not be undertaking any academic studies in order to allow him to be fully involved in pastoral ministry.
- This stage must not be confused with Transition to Ministry

PREPARATION FOR FINAL VOWS

“Religious profession is the definitive act of the whole missionary life of Redemptorists.”
(Const. 54)

“Some form of preparation, after the manner of novitiate, is to be made for perpetual profession; it should last for at least a month.” (G.S. 075)

Decision: The preparation for Final Vows will last for at least one month (G.S. 075), in addition to the canonically required eight-day retreat. The program will be for those confreres who have discerned their commitment to the Congregation, applied for perpetual profession and have been accepted. In so far as possible, Preparation for Final Vows must take place at the (Sub)Conference level. Effective 2016.

- It has become common practice in many Units to include the retreat as part of the one-month preparation. This decision allows for adequate preparation and a proper respect for the importance of the canonically mandated retreat.
- Because of the seriousness of the commitment which the confreres are preparing to make, the impression must not be given that this is the “*last bridge to cross*” before professing Final Vows.
- This is indeed an important stage of the initial formation process and must be approached with the same seriousness of every other stage and given the necessary time allotted so that the goals of the stage may be achieved.
- Preparation for Perpetual Profession is one of the most appropriate stages to engage in formation on an Interprovincial/(Sub)Conference level.
- The Secretariats of formation of the (Sub)Conferences will have the occasion to work on a program of formation, choose the directors, find an appropriate location, and determine its duration in keeping, of course, with the General Government’s decision.

3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERPROVINCIAL FORMATION

ONE YEAR OF INITIAL FORMATION OUTSIDE OF THE UNIT OF ORIGIN

(See Profile of Redemptorist Confrere...XXIV Gen. Ch. n° 6.16)

Recommendation: The General Government recommends that at least one year of initial formation will be done outside of the Unit of origin and in so far as possible outside of the country. Effective 2016 for those beginning the formation process.

- Considering that the mission in our Church today is a global one, future Redemptorists must be adequately prepared to respond to this global mission.

Given in Rome, on April 10, 2015

GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION