**RELIGIOUS**

**LIFE,**

**THE CONTEXT**

**OF PERMANENT**

**FORMATION**

**RELIGIOUS LIFE**

**THE CONTEXT OF PERMANENT FORMATION[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Introduction:**

Permanent formation has often been considered the continuity of initial formation. It is evident that many elements that were learned in initial formation stages and processes will have their continuity during the entire life of the religious. In this article we present a different perspective, an apparently opposing one, which can be formulated as follows: permanent formation precedes and involves initial formation.

The above can be affirmed from two perspectives:

**First**, permanent formation of religious and that of the formation team is the context in which seminarians are offered a life-long formation project. From the lived-experience of religious we know that there are a series of contents related with permanent formation that should be transmitted to the students in initial formation. This is inevitable, because evangelical values ​​are not primarily a theory, but a living reality, which are transmitted from person to person and from group to group, that is, from those who are already consecrated in religious life to those who are called to live it fully in the future. Therefore, it is necessary to not only to encourage these attitudes, life-style and habits in initial formation in the seminary, but at the same time and with equal intensity, cultivate the permanent formation of religious already outside of the initial formation processes. The internal dynamics of the training team is especially important, because if the training team lives a wholistic, authentic formative attitude, they will transmit the same attitude to the students and provoke in them the same values that we are proposing with regards to permanent formation. If the opposite occurs, that is, a formation team that is not involved and committed to this formative attitude, it will be very difficult to motivate these attitudes in the students during the initial formation stages.

**Second**, the wholistic formative elements proposed in initial formation must be presented in such a way that they can be guaranteed or at least facilitated throughout religious life. This is a formation process aimed at lifelong learning. Some examples can clarify what is meant: if spiritual direction is made with intensity during the first stages of initial formation and afterwards in the advance stages of initial formation not considered important, with the argument that the seminarians are already older, the attitude is being prepared that once the student finishes initial formation, he need no longer seek spiritual direction. On the contrary, if spiritual direction is steadily maintained throughout the entire initial formation process, then after initial formation the religious will continue to seek it, because they have discovered their need for it. Another example is that of retreats and spiritual exercises. If the persons in formation are not taught the methodology of spiritual exercises and rather live an imposed series of negative experiences, they will complete initial formation with the desire to never again experience retreats. On the contrary, if the students are offered a process of maturation through the spiritual exercises, they will continue to wish to deepen the process. Something similar can be said about prayer, study, work, sports and many other aspects of initial formation.

Each stage of initial formation contains a series of factors that need to be treated in a processual manner. This gradual process of initial formation not only contributes to the final objectives but also lays the foundations for permanent formation possibilities. The aim is to facilitate experiences that lead to a maturity that advances and avoids the difficulties that normally arise in lifelong learning. For example, we all know that at the middle of life, close to forty years, people in general and also religious, have to face in greater depth the motivations that came into play from the beginning in their vocational decision. The exercise of the examination of motivations that is proposed during the different stages of initial formation, for example, initial promotion, pre-novitiate, novitiate and post novitiate, remotely prepares the religious to face that crisis. An examination of motivations will not be something unknown and even the methodology to do so will be familiar enough.

**Structure of this article:**

For these reasons this article presents a description and context of each of the stages of permanent formation and its corresponding profile. It should be noted that the profiles are minimum, that is, the minimum that can be expected having completed the corresponding stage. The fact that some aspects are not covered helps each person to discover other areas on which he has to work. It is hoped that this presentation will offer a broad perspective and objectify the complementarity of initial formation with lifelong permanent formation. For the directors and members of the formation team, the profiles can be used to locate their own personal stage and situation. This is useful because it places all those who are intervening in formation in a formative process. Hopefully this introduction explains why permanent formation is presented as preceding and intimately involved in the process of initial formation.

A description of each of the life stages of religious and their corresponding profiles are presented with the objective of defining the stages of permanent formation. Two more factors must be considered.

The first is the chronological age of the religious. As a human factor, it forms a necessary basis for the entire vocational process. It is not enough to speak of the first ten years since final profession because it is not the same, for example, when the religious professed at a young age or when, which today is very frequent, professed near the age of forty.

The second factor is the process of spiritual and vocational life. The dialogue between human factors and the vocational process must be dynamic and help to discern more clearly the means that need to be employed in each of the stages of permanent formation.

Therefore, when introducing each of the stages, a consideration of both factors is made.

In this article we present a five-stage framework for permanent formation, namely:

1. Initiation stage (the first five years after initial formation),
2. Stability stage (before the age of forty),
3. Return to one´s Fundamental Vocation stage (from forty to fifty-five years),
4. Wisdom stage (fifty-five years until the health situation of the person allows), and
5. Spiritual Legacy Stage (when the religious is elderly and/or sickly).

Each stage has its corresponding profile which in this article are divided into six different dimensions: Spiritual, Human, Communal, Academic, Apostolic and Personal Project.

1. **Initiation stage**

**Description and Context:**

This is the stage when permanent formation begins. The initiation stage is that of the young religious outside of initial formation structures and in mission. It is usually a stage of intense learning in pastoral life, with abundant relationships and commitments. Its duration tends to be fixed because it depends more on the initiation into religious life than on the religious chronological stage. For those who profess final vows and leave the initial formation stage very young, between 26 and 30 years, it seems appropriate to last five years. For someone who was older, for example, who made final vows with more than 40 years, it might be advisable to shorten this stage so that he will soon join the next stage or even skip it.

From the perspective of the chronological age, the challenge of generativity is being fully lived. This has already been the challenge during the post novitiate stage, but now it takes concrete form when exercising the ministry in a concrete community, so to speak, in real life. The young religious spontaneously defines a pastoral and vocational style, generates projects, contributes to the local church and community and involves certain originality from the specific activities that he has to carry out. It is logical that the newly finally professed tends to stabilize quickly. However, problems often arise during these early years, and even withdrawals (desertions) from religious life. When this happens, it is almost always due to issues not sufficiently addressed during initial formation. A good strategy for these cases, if possible, is to resort to those who were their formators or spiritual directors, because they know them well. They can even be asked to resume the formative process of previous stages.

**Profile:**

The profile of the initiation stage can be described as follows:

- **Spiritual dimension**: The religious cultivates religious spiritual life amid pastoral activity and manages to give spirituality an effective priority. He guarantees a sufficient life of prayer, not only by praying the liturgy of the hours, but also by meditating on the Word of God and the spirituality of the Charism of his Religious Institute. He accepts communal mediation as enriching to his spiritual life, adapts to the customs and values of the religiosity of the context of the mission. He begins to develop in an original and proper way the charism of his Institute. He seeks the stable help of a spiritual director. He often approaches sacramental reconciliation. He is available for service to those in need.

- **Human Dimension**: The Religious establishes habits of exercise (sports) and hygiene in his religious life. He effectively dedicates himself to the work that has been entrusted to him, becoming co-responsible for mission. He does not behave like an employee who simply does what he is commanded, but as a true collaborator, co-responsible for the mission. He takes care of himself, attending the challenges that remained pending from initial formation. He shows signs of personal maturity in his reactions and attitudes.

**- Communal dimension:** The religious accept criticisms and warnings from others, in this sense he remains willing to learn and correct his actions. He asks and appreciates fraternal correction. He consults his projects with those who should be involved, and he shares these projects with his community. He relates to the laity on a fraternal, respectful level, without imposing himself, rather learning from them and collaborating with them. He participates assiduously in the religious community, contributing what is naturally expected of a young member. He establishes with his family the relationship that corresponds to the values ​​of his religious life.

**- Academic dimension**: The religious does more specialized studies. He maintains an acceptable rhythm of reading and intellectual interests as well as his intellectual and cultural hobbies. He is interested in the opportunities offered for ongoing formation in his Province and Congregation. He learns to use properly his free time. He provides opportunities for the formation of the persons who collaborate with the community.

**- Apostolic dimension**: The religious adapts his personal project to the mission needs and possibilities of the community in which he is inserted. He is committed to youth and vocation ministry. He is available for community apostolic needs. He provides the means to improve his theoretical and practical training to better carry out the mission in which he is involved. He demonstrates his availability for any service or for a new missionary assignment.

**- Personal project dimension:** The religious continues to develop his personal project. He follows up on areas that were pending from his initial formation. He has the capacity to recuperate and work at these areas. He participates with interest in the permanent formation of his congregational unit and his local community. He cultivates the dimensions of his personality in a balanced way.

1. **Stability stage**

**Context:**

Having professed final vows for five years, the religious moves on to a new stage that tends toward greater stability. The duration of this second stage varies, depending on the vocational process and the chronological age of each religious. When the person has received final profession between 26 and 30 years, this stage lasts approximately five to ten years. In the case of those who professed at age 40 or older, it may be even better to skip this stage and advance directly from the initiation stage to the return to one´s fundamental vocation stage. The religious has acquired some experience, which he begins to systematize and apply in other assignments, depending on the changes and the circumstances in which he lives out his ministry and community life, establishing a more defined style in his religious identity and ministry. The natural limit of the stability stage is the crisis of middle age, which occurs in, especially in the case of males, around 40 years of age. In many religious institutes the criterion of the first ten years of religious life is used, but a criterion that combines the chronological age and the vocational process would be more appropriate, for example: from five years of religious profession to 40 years of age.

Stability is further strengthened when the experiences and projects carried out are moved to other assignments and the style achieved becomes a reference for others for example, for the laity, other consecrated persons or for an apostolic movement. The individual knows that he has made a personal contribution, which defines his way of living mission and of being in his Congregational unit. It can be said that during this stage the contribution of each one will make during his religious life is defined, even though germinal, in it´s essential features, and for that reason it is important that the religious accomplishes it from an objective capacity of which he can be proud.

To a certain extent the religious examines and evaluates, and depending on the limits that reality itself presents to him, the project he outlined during the initial stage. The re-reading of this project establishes an internal dynamism in which the person experiences himself fully, in a gradual process towards a well-defined vocational identity and towards commitments that, at least at this moment, seem clear and radical enough. The religious usually has the conviction that he is progressively and effectively journeying towards holiness.

During the stability stage, the so-called "realism" crisis occurs, different from that of the middle age crisis and prior to it. This crisis is a deeply felt difficulty in accepting the real conditions in which he must live his own vocation and mission. It is a crisis that tends to be resolved with relative ease, through the option to accept the limitations and to act in the midst of them, while effectively carrying out the project itself, is perhaps not accomplished at the pace he would have wished. It is a crisis of realism because it supposes the overcoming of excessively utopian perspectives.

**Profile:**

The profile of the stability stage can be described as follows:

**-** **Spiritual dimension:** The religious cultivates the spiritual life in the midst of missionary activity and manages to give spirituality an effective priority beyond his occupations. He guarantees a stable life of prayer that adapts easily to the circumstances of his pastoral assignments. He develops in an original and proper way the religious charism, we can say that he already has a charismatic identity. He maintains the stable help of a spiritual director and a confessor.

**- Human dimension**: The religious maintains the habits of exercise, sports and hygiene. He seeks a balance between activity and leisure. He learns to work assiduously and to dedicate moments to rest and relationship with his family. The apostolic commitments he has assumed interpret and guide his affective and sexual life, concentrating all his energies in them. He lives with passion the evangelizing mission experiencing a true dedication to his religious life and mission.

**-** **Communal dimension:** The religious accepts criticism and warnings from others. He asks for and appreciates corrections. He consults about projects with those involved and shares them with his community. He lives an intense commitment in the social and justice field. He makes a real contribution to the religious and diocesan communities as a sign of his generativity. He establishes and maintains the bonds of authentic friendship with his collaborators, especially with the laity.

- **Academic dimension:** The religious does more specialized studies if he has the opportunity. He maintains an acceptable rhythm of reading and intellectual work. He develops his intellectual and cultural hobbies. He is interested in the formation opportunities offered by his religious Institute, by the diocese where he is integrated and in other activities of permanent formation. He uses his free time in a dedicated manner for rest and recreation, especially on his day off and holiday times. He projects on these moments of leisure the significance of family and religious fraternity.

**-** **Apostolic dimension.** The religious adapts his personal project to the needs of the community and to the commitments he receives. He maintains his commitment in the promotion of youth spirituality and new vocations. He develops apostolic projects of greater scope and with more stability. His dedication to mission is very evident.

**-** **Personal project dimension:** The religious continues to develop his personal project and adapts it to the circumstances of the community or to changes in assignments. He is open to the challenges of growth that each experience offers. He maintains interest in the opportunities for permanent formation either in his Congregation, the Conference of Religious or in the diocese where he is integrated.

1. **The return to one´s**

**Fundamental Vocation stage**

**Context:**

This stage is characterized by the crisis of middle age, a crisis that all religious go through because it mixes a physical and hormonal origin with a series of psychic and spiritual contents. It is a deep problem, which implies great difficulty for the person. It is not fundamentally a crisis of vocation, but a crisis of personality, which logically affects the vocational experience. Its fundamental components are: the verification of physical decline, accompanied by the appearance of diseases in the initial phase; fatigue in the assumed commitments, in apostolic and vocational life, with the feeling that life is escaping; the experience of failure, of trial, of persecution and difficulties in the path undertaken; the discovery and recognition of motivations that the individual previously did not want to see, but now has to face. This complex situation can manifest itself in critical attitudes, in difficulty to believe and trust, and in a rediscovery of one's affectivity and sexuality.

We call this stage "back to one´s fundamental vocation" because the most felt need at this moment is to recover the fundamental essentials, even though many of the achievements of the previous stage are questioned. People usually live this crisis amid great responsibilities. The religious are at the same time in a stage of great apostolic and work activity. The religious has acquired experience of daily life and work, and therefore is able to coordinate a variety of projects, contribute to the progress of the Institution itself and to help others in their journey.

In crisis we speak of a certain "resolution". Here it is very difficult to state the end of this crisis in those terms, because the elements that come to light at this moment belong to the depth of the personality, and for that reason it is more about "confronting" the situation and learning to live with it. This "coping" may take between ten to fifteen years. Therefore, it is impossible to expect an immediate resolution. The crisis causes wounds that may never heal, and therefore characterize the personality. It must be recognized however that this is where great conversions have taken place. A change towards a more positive orientation of existence is possible, but it is done only at the price of facing oneself. Obviously, it is a moment in which spiritual and even technical accompaniment becomes essential and in which the religious needs to be welcomed by his community for what he is, a religious and for this identity to become more coherent.

**Profile:**

These are the final features (profile) of the stage:

- **Spiritual dimension:** Beyond the difficulties that life poses to him, the religious maintains the priority of the spiritual life, which for him has become un-renounceable. He faces the crisis of middle age with the systematic help of a spiritual director. The religious transforms the difficulties and makes of them an opportunity to deepen his religious identity and charism. The religious adapts his use of spiritual means to his lived reality.

- **Human dimension**: The religious resorts, if necessary, to technical assistance in his physical and mental health. He maintains a moderate pace of activity, without getting carried away by activism or laziness. He faces and works out the difficulties that may arise in his emotional and sexual life. He receives the acceptance that others offer him beyond his limitations, allowing himself to be loved freely and in a special way within the fraternity of his religious family.

- **Communal dimension:** The religious incorporates the proposals of others to enter mutually in his own and their lives and vocation. He maintains his social commitments despite possible difficulties or criticisms. He deepens his commitments to the diverse aspects of religious life. He finds in his religious and faith-based community an existential reference amid the crisis.

- **Academic dimension:** The religious offers his experience in the mission to the forming of other younger religious. He stimulates the intellectual development of younger religious and students. The relationships that the religious establishes in the mission reaffirms his vocation. He puts his intellectual reflections at the service of the mission. He offers a sense of community and responds positively when asked to in the use of his free time.

**- Apostolic dimension:** The religious maintains without difficulty the apostolic commitments that he had assumed in the past. He systematizes his experience in the apostolate and offers it to others to the extent that it can be useful. He is available to assume the direction of apostolic works if and when necessary. He is a source of encouragement for others who have become involved in apostolic activity.

- **Personal project dimension:** The religious tackles the crisis in a profound way. This crisis becomes a vocational reference point for him as a religious. He elaborates a fundamental essential project that responds to his real situation.

1. **Wisdom stage**

**Context:**

This stage is known as the "third age". The mid-life crisis has been sufficiently assimilated, and the religious has made the determination to remain faithful in his fundamental vocational commitment. We call it "the option for wisdom" because his life experiences have produced in him a solidity and serenity sufficient to face the events and above all the limitations that reality imposes. The events and limitations qualify his own project and his vision of himself, of others and of his fellow religious. If in the previous stage it was a question of returning to fundamentals, they have now been recovered and the religious advances with more conviction, confidence and with a more authentically based spirituality. Everything is now more flexible and adaptable, but at the same time he works with greater security.

The duration of the third age is variable. It depends on the physical and mental health state of the individual. Those who do not experience significant limitations in this stage can extend it for a much longer span of time, perhaps for twenty to thirty years. Elderly religious are those who are not yet old in the sense of limitations that prevent them from continuing to collaborate in mission. To put it in a positive way, these are religious with accumulated wisdom who are able to respond to the challenges of reality enriched by their extensive experiences.

It is fundamental that the religious of this stage can continue to develop those skills he practiced in the previous stages. Besides benefitting himself, this becomes an example for younger religious. However, it can be counterproductive to ask the religious at this stage to develop new skills or to venture into totally new environments and activities. The counterpart of wisdom is the loss of agility to undertake new tasks.

This stage is lived in full when the religious makes the decision to move to the background, which is naturally asked of those who are already grandparents, leaving aside ambition for prominence or power. That is why we have insisted on the word "option". The religious must reach the determination to continue contributing to others, but he does so from this new standpoint. The religious stops clinging to the residues of youth that are left, and clearly affirms the rational and spiritual values ​​that will be permanent and will continue to develop until his last breath.

The most typical characteristic of a good resolution of the third age is the option for the next generation. The religious sees favorably his successors and positively assesses the way he must live his religious life values ​​and their style in the execution of activities. From the sympathy expressed in relation to younger religious, his credibility with them is strengthened.

**Profile:**

The profile at the end of this stage is the following:

- **Spiritual dimension:** The religious has come to a synthesis of his spiritual and religious life. He becomes a master/teacher/model of spiritual life for others. His contribution to the community is nuanced by spiritual values. The religious emphasizes the value of prayer and discernment in his lifestyle and activities. He has achieved great spiritual stability.

- **Human dimension:** The religious expresses his feelings with equanimity and in a timely manner. He recognizes his abilities and limits with simplicity. He deals with the health problems that are conveniently presented to him, entering the dynamic of preventive health. He continues to exercise, that is, the adequate exercise for his physical condition. He has learned to enjoy life in the simplest things.

- **Communal dimension:** The religious is a reference of stability in the religious community, more than for what he does, he contributes by his presence and his life testimony. He strongly supports younger generations, he is an encouragement for them. He lends to others the services that are necessary with more freedom and humility. He does not cling to positions, so he knows how to take responsibility for them and at the same time is willing to do without them. He is freer in this sense.

* **Academic dimension:** The religious develops and

synthesizes his intellectual and mission career, offering the result to others. He communicates his own wisdom teaching the youngest on the theoretical and practical levels. He has made work a habit to which he remains faithful. He continues to maintain a sufficient pace of study. He knows and appreciates the advances that have been made over time in the subjects and areas he knows in depth.

- **Apostolic dimension:** He naturally falls into a second plane propitiating the prominence of others, mainly the younger confreres. He incorporates the contributions of young people in his apostolic service. He continues to serve with spontaneity in the apostolates in which he was involved in the past. He incorporates more modern technical means in his apostolate. He possesses attitudes of deeper communion with the pastoral plan of the unit and diocese and with new initiatives, even going beyond differences or his pastoral sensitivity.

- **Personal project dimension:** He is humbler in his perception of himself and at the same time more understanding with others. He interprets his personal project as a testimony of life in favor of the new generations.

1. **The Spiritual Legacy stage**

**Context:**

We come to the final stage, that of the elderly. They are what we can properly call elders. It is convenient to make a clear distinction between the simply elderly and the elderly sick. The elderly sick are the ones that need continuous assistance.

Elderly people have an important task to do in relation to their own vocation. The religious is at a place in which he faces the possibility of not being. This is in contrast with other stages of life in which it was emphasized whether to become or to remain.

The first task of the elderly is to recover his prayer life, which was always present but now can be lived more radically and with more time. This dimension of prayer is the central element of the process, continues to have a leading role occupying his time, characterizes the quality of aging, of relationships, of attention to disease and death. In this spiritual field we must also consider the content of the religious charism and the styles through which this charism has been put into practice and accentuated throughout life. For example, a person who has always lived in availability and poverty continues to do so spontaneously at this stage. Today there has been much progress in medical care for the elderly, however, we must not forget fundamentals values which qualify medical progress.

The religious constructs a synthesis of his life from each of the formation dimensions. The values ​​that became irrevocable throughout his life, are now the object of a quiet and profound testimony, marked by an attitude of hope. The benevolent gaze that he cultivated in the previous stage in relation to the younger generations becomes a spiritual testament. It is about leaving a good inheritance to others, which is the fruit of his life and work. Evidently the best heritage is the experience of vocational values transmitted through his life, person and attitudes.

The way to confront the limitations of age and diseases is determined by the spiritual life and pastoral identity that the religious continues to cultivate amid these limitations. This is a moment of life in which the unassuming and daily accompaniment of others becomes especially significant and profound. He takes the step of helping others and to be helped by others. The religious is accompanied in the everyday rhythm of life and in the simplicity of each dimension of his life. Love becomes deeper by receiving help from others.

**Profile:**

Some features of the vocational profile of the elderly are described below:

- **Spiritual dimension:** The spiritual life has left an undeniable mark on his personality. He is a witness of spiritual life in the midst of his religious and Christian community. His manner of being and presence emphasizes and expresses spiritual values. Despite the difficulties of his age, he continues his prayer life and the use of proven spiritual means. He expresses a profound attitude of gratitude before the mystery of life, of his own vocation and of hope in God.

- **Human dimension:** The religious recognizes with optimism the signs of aging, assuming limitations with a clearly spiritual mood. He lets himself be helped by other people in his health, showing a grateful attitude towards them. He resorts to the treatments that are necessary. He preserves and emphasizes the positive aspects of his personality. He continues to respond to the challenges of personal maturation.

- **Communal dimension:** The religious participates with joy in the life of his religious and Christian community according to his possibilities. He maintains a positive attitude towards young people and is for them a reason for hope. In the measure of his limitations he continues to serve the community, in the simple things that he can contribute. He respects the decisions of the younger confreres who are in charge of the religious and Christian community.

- **Academic dimension:** He maintains the intellectual hobbies that characterized his life in the past. He shares his vision of reality with others. He continues working to the best of his ability. He is informed about what is new and values ​​it.

- **Apostolic dimension:** Although his participation in pastoral leadership is reduced, he is willing to serve in whatever way he can in the apostolate without wanting to occupy central leadership roles. The apostolate and mission of the youngest members of his Institute is a reason for his prayer. He stimulates and encourages new apostolic projects.

- **Personal project dimension:** The religious assumes the limitations of its age and puts the means in place to cope with them. He focuses his gaze on the next generation by leaving a spiritual testament.

**Conclusion:**

We have reflected on the various stages of vocational religious life, which correspond, more or less to chronological ages. The life journey of the religious reflects the deep relationship that exists between the stages of formation, initial and permanent. The two processes involve each other. permanent formation should be the reference point for all of formation because it is the goal towards where each one journeys, and thus should be clearly defined. Of little would it serve a very demanding initial formation that is not permanent during all of the religious´ life journey. Therefore, we insist that permanent formation practices and life-style should be practiced in the programs of initial training and should establish and ferment the habits and customs that will remain throughout life. This long-term vision is also a requisite for the formators of initial formation.

On the other hand, the global view of all stages indicates to us that it is possible and convenient to create formation programs for each stage. Evidently in each stage different pedagogical methodologies should be put in place and with different rhythms. It is not the same, for example, to have the group in a single house than to have them scattered in different houses. Whatever the physical structure, a specific systematic/progressive formation project for each stage and especially for those in the stage of permanent formation has to be provided. Ideally, permanent formation should also be provided on the local community level. Pope Francis makes two comments with regards to continual formation: it makes no sense sponsoring periodic permanent formation structures like workshops, assemblies, etc., without permanent formation in the local communities. Pope Francis also reflects that no religious community has the right to accept candidates into its Institute if it does not have programs of permanent formation.

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DECISIONS, 25º GENERAL CHAPTER TOUCHING

**CONTINUING FORMATION**

***Dec. 6:*** ***The Future of the Congregation in the Northern Hemisphere*** (3º paragraph)

The study of English and other languages is to be included in all initial and ongoing formation programs to prepare confreres for possible work in the future in the Conferences of the Northern Hemisphere.

***Dec. 11:*** ***Office for shared mission with the laity*** (3º paragraph)

The Office, with the help of the Conference Commissions, and the General Secretariat for Formation, will also produce a *Ratio formationis* for the preparation and formation of both lay partners and professed Redemptorists for shared mission.

***Dec. 13:*** ***Media in the service of Evangelization***

Conferences, in collaboration with the various centers and offices of the Congregation for spiritual, ethical and moral training, will work together in the creation and support of media and educational channels that offer ongoing ethical reflection on contemporary issues that are important for civil society.

***Dec. 24: The******Promotion of Redemptorist Spirituality***

Each Conference, in cooperation with the Center for Spirituality, will promote our spirituality for the revitalization of our consecrated life.

***Dec. 32:*** ***In solidarity with the poor***

All Units will ensure that initial and ongoing formation programs include components of “formation by insertion” which allow for experiences of real closeness to the poor. They will develop programs that will make provision for a period of a more stable sharing in the life and lifestyle of the poor whom we serve.

***Dec. 33: Preserving the vitality of the Redemptorist tradition in Moral Theology***

Since knowledge of Moral Theology is part of our tradition from the time of Alphonsus, the Congregation will pursue a variety of ways to preserve and develop the teaching of, and research in, this science. Familiarity with the science of Moral Theology is to be considered a requirement of the ordinary formation of every Redemptorist. As such, it is to be given priority in the initial and continuing formation of all confreres. Those confreres with a aptitude for study and research will be encouraged to pursue higher studies in this science to ensure the continuation of our tradition.

***Dec. 34: Continuing Formation***

The General Government will expand the membership of the General Secretariat for Formation. This expansion will allow the Secretariat to take responsibility for both initial and continuing formation more effectively. The work of the Secretariat will endeavour to develop programs that aim at conversion of hearts, at more effective ways of achieving the vision we have in common, and at deepening our specific Redemptorist identity.

***Dec. 35: Regular Courses for Formators***

The General Secretariat for Formation will continue to offer regular courses for the preparation and ongoing training of Directors of Formation, either in Rome, in the Conferences, or on-line. The same Secretariat shall continue to produce resources to aid Formation Directors in carrying out formation for Mission in the Congregation.

Particular attention must be given to the “importance of missionary availability” as a determining factor in a vocation to Redemptorist life.

***Dec. 36: Training of Laity in Moral Theology***

Each Conference will arrange for the regular formation of lay partners on the moral teaching of the Church and investigate the possibility of sponsoring a capable Lay Partner in the pursuit of an advanced degree in the area of Moral Theology.

***Dec. 37: Communications and the New Media***

Each of the five Conferences of the Congregation will appoint a confrere who will undergo study and training in the area of Communication. He will then assume responsibility for the Communication needs of the Conference and act as a direct link or liaison person with the Units of the Conference and the Office of Communications of the Congregation. He will also be available to work with the various Formation Programs of the Conference to ensure that future Redemptorists are equipped to avail of the evangelizing possibilities of various forms of new media.

***Dec. 49: Continuing Formation in Gospel Stewardship and Financial Management***

Each Conference will hold a Seminar on “Gospel Stewardship and Financial Management” as soon as possible after the completion of the *Manual for Administration and Financial Affairs* and the Internal Audit Plan. Participation in the Seminar is required for: the Conference Coordinator, the Consultor General from the Conference, Unit Superiors, Unit Treasurers (both Redemptorist and Lay), Directors of Formation and others involved in financial administration. The General Government, with the help of financial experts, will arrange the dates and specific content of the Seminar.

Subsequent to the Conference Seminar, the government of each Unit will facilitate (perhaps in conjunction with other Units) a Seminar/Workshop for Community Treasurers and others involved in financial administration. The agenda, content and Resource Persons for the Seminar/Workshop will be determined by the General Government, in consultation with the Coordinator of each Conference and appropriate financial experts*.*

1. I have freely adapted, translated and added elements to the original article so that it be applicable to Religious Life. The original article in Spanish comes from the book, *Los itinerarios formativos en el Seminario diocesano, Directorio para la formación sacerdotal*, by P. Emilio Lavaniegos G., de los Sacerdotes Operarios Diocesanos. He is a Mexican who now works in the Vatican in the area of Priestly formation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)