**a) VOCATION MINISTRY STAGE**

**(Initial Contact and Inquiry)**

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**TERMINOLOGY:**

**Different Units use different names for those assigned to Vocation Ministry:**

**Coordinator(s) of Vocation Ministry, Vocation Director(s), Regional Vocation Director, Vocation Promoter(s), Vocational Minister(s), etc.**

**The term «vocation promotion» seems to denote a very limited scope of activity, for example, the production of flyers, posters, vocation preaching, etc.**

**Since this stage involves a lot more, for example: discernment, follow-up, accompaniment, continuity, personal and family support, vocation nurturing, etc., the term for vocation promotion most used today is “VOCATION MINISTRY”.**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Essential to vocation ministry is “attraction”, that is, the appeal of the faithful living out of the particular charism by its members. Consequently, all the members of a Unit are involved in this “ministry”. This involvement should include the lay Redemptorists.**

**Every Redemptorist Unit must have a Vocation ministry. Vocation ministry implies that the work should always be done with a team which often consists of confreres, laity and members of other Religious Institutes.**

**This document is not intended to be an “official” Congregation document but rather, because of the different challenging situations in different parts of the world, the document is more a sharing of experiences, especially positive one as an aid to Units needing this help and ideas.**

**The new reconfiguration of the Units will necessarily involve the reorganizing of this ministry between various countries and so a sensitivity to all that this new paradigm involves in needed.**

**As this ministry becomes more and more established, we envision that there be greater intercommunication and collaboration with the youth and laity commissions.**

**We should not overlook the decision of the General Government in it’s “Decree on Formation” (Prot. N. 0000 117/2015): The General Government establishes the second Sunday of November an annual day for the promotion of the Redemptorist Missionary Vocation throughout the Congregation. Effective 2015.**

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**SCOPE OF THIS PRESENTATION:**

It should be noted that this presentation is a combination at the same time of a *stage* and a *ministry.* This presentation does not include the formality involved with the actual acceptance into the Redemptorist formation system[[1]](#footnote-1) but can rather be described as the ***initial contact and inquiry stage*** and presents some fundamental principles and an exchange of experiences of vocation ministry.

**INITIAL CONTACT AND INQUIRY STAGE:**

“Initial contacts come from many places. Some are referred by confreres, other religious men or women, or friends of the Redemptorists. Some come because of a web search, some from their experience with individual Redemptorists, others from their involvement in works sponsored by the Congregation, or through the ministry of confreres.

This initial enquiry is usually followed by contact with a vocation promoter. General information is given about the Congregation, but information is also gleaned about the candidate – name, age, email address, education history, work history, and what about the Redemptorists makes him think he might be interested in joining.

If at first glance the individual has the basic qualities of a potential candidate and the enquirer indicates an ongoing interest, a discernment process can begin. This can lead to a variety of meetings, retreats or live in experiences. The purpose at this stage is to develop a relationship with the candidate and for the candidate to know more about religious life and Redemptorist living. Most Units of the Congregation agree that this stage of initial contact should last at least one year.

Generally speaking, applicants must give evidence of healthy emotional balance, physical health, good moral character, solid conviction of faith, and proper motivation. The applicant should also have a mastery of the language in which initial formation will take place. It is important that candidates coming from other cultures receive adequate help to enter into the cultural context and language where initial formation will occur.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

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**CANON LAW:**

**The following canons at this stage of Vocation Ministry should be considered:**

**Canon 1024 Baptized**

**Canon 1025 Requisite qualities**

**Canon 1026 Freedom**

**Canon 1027 Careful preparation**

**Canon 1028 Instructed**

**Canon 1029 Faith, right intention, knowledge, moral, etc**

**Canon 1031 25 years and mature**

**Canon 1033 Confirmation**

**Canon 1036 Written intention and pled**

**Canon 1037 Obligation of celibacy**

**Canon 1039 Retreat**

**Canon 1041 Impediments**

**Canon 1051 Investigation to be made**

**Canon 1052 Doubt**

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**REDEMPTORIST CONSTITUTIONS AND STATUTES:**

**Chapter IV of our Constitutions is dedicated to the *Formation of the Apostolic Community*. Of special consideration and importance for this stage of Vocation Ministry are Constitutions Nos. 77, 78, 79 and 80 and Statutes Nos. 050, 051, 052, and 053.**

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**FROM THE *RATIO FORMATIONIS GENERALIS*, updated in 2020**

**Redemptorist Vocational Ministry:** In this pastoral context, within a broad vocational process, to Consecrated Life and as lay missionaries, the candidates have their first encounter with the Congregation. At the end of this discernment, a more personalized vocational accompaniment can lead the candi­date to the next stage in his formation. For this, they are two distinct processes, one for the candidates to Consecrated Life and others as lay missionaries. We concentrate here on the process of the candidates and formandi to Consecrated Life. For the lay missionaries, there will be another different process (cf. Formation Directory of lay Redemptorists).

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE:** This is the time of the first contact with the Redemptorist Apostolic Life. Its end is to announce and to promote the call of God, and to detect, to accompany, and to discern the vocational aptitude of a candidate (signs of being call) to follow Jesus Christ the Redeemer by preaching the word of God to the poor.

**SPECIAL NOTES:**

* All confreres (including those in Initial Formation) should be sensitive to the importance of proposing our religious and missionary vocation to others and of fostering those who show signs of being called by God to the Congregation (CC. 79-80).
* We should be realistic with regards to the youth of today and those that God is calling. Today’s youth have a sensitivity to human values while at the same time attracted by a consumeristic society; they affirm personal liberty but are not successful in defending it when massified; they want to be protagonists of their own history but find difficult making life options; they tend to have easy access to greater information, but lack a sense of history, they tend to accent the immediate…
* “A particular form of discernment involves the effort to discover our own vocation. Since this is a very personal decision that others cannot make for us, it requires a certain degree of solitude and silence” (CV, No. 283).
* Each Unit should rigorously put into effect the words of the XXI General Chapter: “We ask the communities to try to open themselves to young people, according to the culture of each country. We recommend that there be in each (Vice) Province, or the ambient of the Conference, one house that is especially dedicated to welcoming young people…” (XXI General Chapter 1991, Final Document No. 56.d).
* Following Decision 29 of the XXV General Chapter, “Vocation Ministry must be a priority in the pastoral planning of all Units and local communities, ensuring that the necessary personnel and material resources are made available in order to realize the objectives of this ministry” (XXV General Chapter 2016, Dec. No. 29).
* Every Unit, by itself or in collaboration with other Units, will appoint full-time Vocation Promoters who will work together as a team to promote the Redemptorist missionary vocation.
* In the promotion of the Redemptorist missionary vocation, special attention is to be given to the promotion of the vocation of the Redemptorist Brother. (XXV General Chapter 2016, Dec. 29).
* Every Unit should define the relationship between youth pastoral and vocation pastoral.
* It is recommended that the (Vice) Provincial plan there be included vocation encounters each year (for example, vocational retreats, convocations, etc.).
* Redemptorist vocation directors should work together with lay partners in the ministry of promoting vocations to both forms of belonging to the Redemptorist family.
* As much as possible, the vocation directors should feel equipped and competent to “spot” lay people who might have the heart, the spirit and the call to be Redemptorist Associates and Lay Missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, and invite them or put them I touch with those who coordinate partnership in mission in that Unit.
* As much as possible and appropriate, some of the formation at this stage (and subsequent stages) of both forms should take place jointly, so that comfort levels are raised, and they learn the skills of collaboration.
* Some of the meetings of the circles of Redemptorist Associates (sessions for ongoing formation, faith sharing, etc.) are opportunities for men inquiring into the Redemptorist way of life to get to know more about Alphonsus, the Redemptorist Saints and Blessed, Redemptorist documents, Spirituality, Charism and other areas of Redemptorist life.

**Candidates who come from formation houses of other Religious Institutes:**

This question becomes particularly delicate in the case of “*wandering* *candidates*”: relational and affective instability, and the lack of ecclesial roots, are danger signals.  Ignoring ecclesial norms on these matters is irresponsible behavior, which can have serious consequences for the Christian community (SYP, No. 163)

“It is contrary to the norms of the Church to admit to the seminary or to the house of formation persons who have already left or, a fortiori, have been dismissed from other seminaries or houses of formation, without first collecting the due information from their respective bishops or major superiors, especially concerning the causes of the dismissal or departure. The previous formators have the explicit duty of furnishing exact information to the new formators”: Enchiridion Vaticanum 25 (2011), 1284; cf. can. 241, § 3.

**Adult Vocations:**

“Those who discover the call to the ministerial priesthood at a more advanced age come with a more developed personality and a life journey characterized by a range of experiences. Their initial admission to the *formation house* should be preceded by a spiritual and ecclesial programme, in which a serious discernment of the motivations in responding to a vocation can be undertaken. It is necessary to assess the interval between Baptism or Christian conversion and entry into the formation house carefully since it is not unusual to encounter confusion between the *sequela Christi* and the call to Consecration in Religious Life. As in the case of other candidates, these candidates should be accompanied in a serious and comprehensive journey, which should include, in the context of community life, a solid spiritual and theological formation, using appropriate pedagogical and didactic methods, that take account of the personal profile of each man. It will be the competence of the *Congregation and the Conferences* to issue specific norms appropriate for their own national situation, assessing whether to establish an age limit for the admission of such vocations and considering whether to establish a separate formation house for them” (GVP, II, C., No. 24).

**Vocations Arising among Indigenous Peoples:**

“Special attention needs to be given to vocations among indigenous peoples: they need a formation which takes account of their culture. While receiving a proper theological and pastoral formation for their future ministry, these candidates for the religious life should not be uprooted from their own culture. The very presence ofsuch vocations is an important element of the inculturation of the Gospel in these regions, and the richness of their culture must be adequately respected. Vocational assistance can be provided in the native language whenever necessary, placing this in the context of the local culture” (GVP, II, d, No. 25).

**Vocations and Migrants**

“The phenomenon of migration is becoming quite widespread for a variety of reasons of a social, economic, political and religious nature. It is important that Christian communities offer constant pastoral care of immigrant families that live and work in their country for a time. These families are a valuable resource for them. Vocations to the priestly ministry can arise from within these families, which must be accompanied, keeping in mind the need for gradual cultural integration.

There are others who, feeling called by the Lord, leave their own country, in order to receive formation for the priesthood elsewhere. It is important to pay attention to their personal history and to the background from which they have come, and to assess the motivations carefully for their vocational choice, establishing a dialogue with their Church of origin whenever possible. In any case, during the process of formation, it will be necessary to find ways and means to ensure an adequate integration, without underestimating the challenge of cultural differences, which can, at times, make vocational discernment rather complex” (GVP, II, e, Nos. 26 – 27).

**THE HUMAN DIMENSION**

* Sensitivity should be had with the candidates as they adjust to new time schedule, new cultures and new structures.
* A candidate’s personality should be balanced and should appropriately integrate all the dimensions of life in a way appropriate for his age group,
* An initial evaluation of the candidate should be made based on personal observation and information obtained from persons who know the candidate well. It should take into account his family history, the psychological and characterological dynamisms at work in the person’s life such as his level of self-esteem, his propensity for introversion or extroversion, his level of idealism and realism, whether he is an independent person or one who is excessively dependent on others, etc.,
* A candidate should be given an understanding of the dignity of all vocations including the single and married life (cf. *Potissimum Institutioni* 43),
* An attempt should be made to determine a candidate’s capacity to accept himself with both his strengths and shortcomings and his ability to accept others in a healthy way.

**THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION**

* Given that the evangelization impact of the family and school becomes more and more limited, the Redemptorist Youth Vocation Pastoral (RYVP) should be an intense time of evangelization,
* It is highly recommended that a candidate speaks with a spiritual director before entering the program,
* The process of accompaniment should involve at least an initial evaluation of the individual’s experience of God, and of other factors motivating his vocational search,
* Some measure of the candidate’s basic image of God and the Church should also be made,
* Those dealing with the candidate should learn how he expresses his understanding of religion (through myths, devotions, interest in social works, private prayer, etc.),
* They should also try to measure to some degree the candidate’s capacity for prayer and the interior life.

**THE COMMUNITY DIMENSION**

The candidate should have some aptitude for community life:

* A capacity for dialogue,
* A capacity to work with others in a team,
* Openness to life in a community,
* A readiness to forgive and accept others and himself.

**THE ACADEMIC DIMENSION**

* Sensitivity should be had with regards to the struggles in studies.
* The candidate’s ability to do academicstudies should be verified.
* The academic requirements for both brothers and clerics should be clearly indicated in the Ratio.

**THE PASTORAL-MISSIONARY DIMENSION**

* The candidate must have at least a basic aptitude for the Mission of the Congregation,
* It would be good to have had some pastoral experience in his parish, school or youth group,
* He should have some sensitivity to the needs of the poor and the most abandoned and a desire to serve them through ministry in the Congregation.

**PERSONS WITH HOMOSEXUAL TENDENCIES**

In relation to persons with homosexual tendencies who seek admission to our formation system, or discover such a situation in the course of formation, consistent with her own Magisterium, “the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practise homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture’. Such persons, in fact, find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. One must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies”.

Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem – for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before *perpetual profession*”.

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**XXIV (2009) and XXV (2016) GENERAL CHAPTERS**

The XXV General Chapter 2016, in decision No. 29 says when presenting Vocation Ministry: *Vocation Ministry must be a priority in the pastoral planning of all Units and local communities, ensuring that the necessary personnel and material resources are made available in order to realize the objectives of this ministry.*

*Every Unit, by itself or in collaboration with other Units, Will appoint full-time Vocation Promoters who Will work together as a team to promote the Redemptorist missionary vocation.*

*In the promotion of the Redemptorist missionary vocation, special attention is to be given to the promotion of the vocation of the Redemptorist Brother.*

As we may remember, decision No. 10 of the XXIV General Chapter orientated this level saying, “The Redemptorist Vocation Ministry will be more fully integrated into the Formation Secretariats and formation structures a the General (Vice) Provincial and Regional levels”. Por this reason this stage is the first of the formative process.

**POSSIBLE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE CANDIDATES:**

* *Practice of Love of Jesus Christ*.
* A simple biography of S. Alfonso according to languages and translations.
* Introductions to Redemptorists Saints, Blessed, and Martyrs.
* Constant reading of the Gospels.
* Some Congregational letters or *Communicanda*.
* Bibliography related to Consecrated Life

**ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:**

* Participate, at least for a year, in vocational and discernment encounters organized by the Unit.
* The person responsible for the Vocation Ministry will officially present the candidate to the Unit.
* A Redemptorist community of the Unit, that knows the candidate, should officially present him.
* If the candidate comes from another Religious Institute or Diocesan Seminary, a report should be petitioned.
* Certificates of basic required studies.
* Family documents.
* An official request by the candidate to enter into the pre-novitiate stage of formation.

**Some added observations on this stage of formation (from convocation of formators of the Latin American and Caribbean Conference):**

* Promotors should know how to communicate with youth and be familiar with communication means, for example, the use of the media.
* Some candidates are insecure and have not developed the sense of deeper reflection.
* There is a need to understand the indifference of youth as far as the following of Jesus is concerned.
* Vocation promotion becomes difficult in view of bad example within the Church.
* Dysfunctional, divided and broken families from which some of our candidates come.
* The need for adequate structures in order to promote with greater effort the vocation to the life of the Brothers and adult vocations. There is no clear vision as to what to offer the youth in these vocation projects.
* Some candidates come to us from conservative movements which reflect the lived experience of a certain model of Church while others come from politized ambient of their countries.
* Some secularized ambient of the candidates prioritize individualism and the primacy of the image, along with the exaggerated use of technology (social media, video games, etc.) which influence a relativistic identity and Cristian values and the distance from a coherent understanding and practice of the values of the Gospel.
* There are candidates with formative deficiencies in their initial educational process which affects their engagement in university studies.
* There are influences on the youth that lead to little perseverance.
* At times the formators are not specifically trained to be formators.
* The fundamental human formation of candidates at times is very deficient.
* There is a need for integral parallel formation of formators form the different units.
* The growing pressure towards clericalism which pressures religious priests to put on a second level the living of the values of Consecrated Life.
* All the formation stages should establish a gradual process of accompaniment with regards to affectivity and sexuality. While being a theme that should be treated with great respect, there should not been exaggerated taboos or fear.
* There is confusion at times when the candidates are exposed to religious ideas that at times are too radical or too conservative.
* It is important that the candidates do not pass on to further stages without having satisfied the goals of former stages.
* There is a need that the vocation promotors be relatively free from other commitments in order to respond responsible to this stage, esp. when vocation promotion is a priority of the Unit.

###### PERSONAL DATA SHEET

Name: .................................................................................................................

Family address: .................................................................................................................

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Date of birth: ................................................................................................................

Place of birth: .................................................................................................................

Date and place of Baptism: .................................................................................................

Date and place of Confirmation: …………........................................................................

Tel.: .........................................

Identity Document No.: ……………………………..........................................................

Date of the personal feast: ………......................................................................................

Parents names: ………........................................................................................................

Tel. of the parents: ...............................................

Names of the Siblings: ………...........................................................................................

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1. Cf. Serie on Redemptorist Formation, *Manuale Formatorum*, English Edition, Rome 2009, Vol. I, pp. 43 – 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. *Redemptorist Formation, Handbook for Redemptorist Formators*, Vol. 1, 2009, pp. 44 – 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)