**Reflection on Formation Ministry in ‘team’ and Formation Community**

**Introduction – Why is this so important?**

1995 – Letter from Fr. Lasso. Personal journey of each formandus and each formator, but a journey we make in a group together. Part of this ‘group’, walking together with Jesus in the Spirit, is the Formation Team. Not one formator, but a team of formators – at least two – who are also living at the heart of the Formation Community.

2003 – Ratio Formationis – emphasizes this dimension, which is an integral part of the formation community (53). This is true when the formation program takes place within the Province, but is especially true when formation takes place in interprovincial and intercultural formation communities.

2020 – Ratio Formationis revised and renewed – the presence of Formation Teams is clearly well established in the Congregation. This is underlined in a special way in numbers 60 – 64, 72 – 75. But also, we need to extend the notion of ‘team’ beyond the formators directly assigned to this task to include spiritual directors, confessors, secretariat, professionals such as counsellors and psychologists, and professors. Principal focus this morning is on how we function as formation teams within the Formation Community…

Intercultural and Interprovincial – now that we are moving more and more in the direction of Conference houses of formation – from Novitiate onwards.

Witness value of living and working as the Formation Team – living and working in community…

So, can I offer you some ‘ground rules’ for living and working together as ‘one missionary body’? Focus on the dynamic between formators for this session… Especially because this will be an intercultural team. Don’t take anything for granted!!!

**Part 2: How do we make this work?**

**12 Steps for Team Leadership and Ministry**

1. **Welcome** – give and receive ‘welcome’, hospitality. Create an environment between you and among you where you welcome diverse perspectives, opinions, approaches. Welcome one another.
2. **Be present** to one another on the Formation Team – bring your whole self. Remember, this is your first commitment.
3. **Invite** participation in building the team together and listen with care. Don’t insist, demand or force. This takes time. And generosity.
4. As Pope Francis emphasizes, **speak your truth in ways that respects** other peoples’ truths – speak always with respect and listen with respect. Share stories as you build a relationship, not just ideas. Stories help you safely cross the lines of difference in culture, tradition, approach… Don’t debate who’s right and who’s wrong… don’t blame one another or ‘I told you so’.
5. **No need to Fix, to Save, to Advise or to Correct** one another. When appropriate, and when invited, point directions and then build together… But you are not the therapist for the ‘team’, and they are not your ‘support group’. You are a community following Christ the Redeemer together, and only he will heal, save, convert…
6. **Learn to ‘wonder’** before you react: ‘I wonder why he thinks this way? What brought him to this conclusion?’ ‘I wonder why I’m reacting so strongly’… wonder gives us time to question and learn and grow.
7. **Practice asking open, honest questions** – the ones you don’t know the answer to. These elicit insight, and encourage all to be resourceful. These encourage dialogue. Show interest in the others on the team. You care about them, about what they’re thinking, about their experience. Remember not to take anything for granted – you cannot presume to know what another is thinking or feeling!!!
8. **Pay attention to yourself** – especially your inner teacher, your reactions and responses. It can help if you have an outside ‘counselor’ or supervisor to help you work through your own issues as you confront serious questions together.
9. **Pray together**, even when the formandi are not around. Especially cultivate silence. Make sure that you also have spiritual directors – and that you are faithful to this practice! In other words, practice what you preach about formation being a lifelong process, and a witness…
10. **Confidentiality** is absolutely essential – especially between the formators, and with the formandi. Don’t tell the other person’s stories to others, and especially not to the formandi. But confidentiality cannot prevent full disclosure of your colloquia with students to one another on the formation team.
11. **Colloquium and Reports together!** If the formandi know from the start that you will work together as a team, it will become much more difficult for them to play one against the other and to divide you. Again, when you send the reports to the Provincial Superior and Council, make sure that you work on this together, and that it reflects you both. Even if you disagree about something important, include both opinions in the report to the Provincial – but not to the student!!!
12. **Your team has to continue to grow** in its trust and dynamics. Give space and time for this regularly. Take time to ask how the team is working together, to evaluate progress, and to listen to doubts or hesitations. Again, don’t take anything for granted!!!

**Part 3: Group exercise**

Okay, we all agree that this is very important. Now, how do we put it into practice? Let’s take some time for reflection on our experience. Could we do four groups with these questions:

What has been your best experience or experiences so far working in a team? What qualities made this experience work well?

What has been especially challenging for you working as a team in different circumstances? What have you learned from this experience?

Back to the large group and a chance to share, to ask questions, to reflect together…