

Xaverian Missionaries



Ratio Formationis Xaverianae

Formation
in the Xaverian Family





XAVERIAN MISSIONARIES

RATIO FORMATIONIS XAVERIANAE

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Rome 2014



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Letter of the Superior General

Dear brothers,

the new edition of the *Ratio Formationis Xaverianae* has been completed in accordance with the wishes of the XV General Chapter (61).

The new edition is the result of a profound study of the previous edition, and the integration of new sections, in compliance with the new demands of the times in which we are living.

Special attention has been given to the logical sequence of the contents, in order to avoid repetitions, and to spirituality, which gives life to the contents.

We therefore recommend this new document to the young Xaverians in formation, to the formators and to the confreres who have already completed their initial formation.

The XVI General Chapter chose this goal for itself: “to be a powerful sign and a further stage in our Family’s growth, a “new beginning” towards the “now”, the “where” and the “how” of God, who sustains us at the heart of the world and the Church, which he looks upon with love and tenderness” (XVI GC 6). The revision of the *Ratio Formatonis Xaverianae* aims to help the formators and candidates to have a clear grasp of the journey and the goals they are to achieve, and to lead each Xaverian back to the foundations of our spirituality, in order to rediscover the authentic ways that enable us to be a powerful sign for the Mission.

I thank all those who worked on the text from 2007 through 2013 with competence and perseverance: the Commission set up by the General Direction, which began the work of revision; the 2007-2013 General Direction and the *ad hoc* Commission which prepared the version that was presented to the XVI General Chapter.

A word of thanks to all the confreres, in a special way to the Formators, who contributed directly to the revision of the text and its new formulation.

I conclude by expressing a wish: may the *Ratio Formatoris Xaverianae* help each Xaverian in formation, or in full-time mission activity, to become firmly rooted in the profound values that must constantly guide our consecrated life for the First Proclamation of Jesus Christ; may it also show us, through its typical simple language, the reality to which we must remain faithful.

Rome, 15 February 2014
Fr. Luigi Menegazzo
Superior General

Abbreviations

I. Church Documents

A. Vatican II

- Vat II *Documents of the Second Vatican Council.*
- AG *Ad Gentes*, Decree on the missionary activity of the Church.
- DV *Dei Verbum*, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.
- GS *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world.
- LG *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.
- NAe *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions.
- OT *Optatam Totius*, Decree on priestly training.
- PC *Perfectae Caritatis*, Decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life.
- SC *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

B. Other documents

- CIC *Code of Canon Law* (1983).
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on Evangelization (1976).
- ES *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Motu Proprio of Pope Paul VI implementing four Council Decrees (1966).
- ET *Evangelica Testificatio*, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI (1971).
- FT *Faciem Tuam Domine requiram*, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2008).
- MR *Mutuae Relationes*, Directives for the mutual relations between Bishops and Religious (1978).
- OPR *Ordo Professionis Religiosae*, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, Rome (1970).
- PDV *Pastores dabo vobis*, Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation on the

- formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day (1992).
- PI *Potissimum Institutioni*, Directives on formation in religious institutes, Congregation for the Institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life (Rome 1990).
- PP *Populorum Progressio*, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the development of peoples (1967).
- RC *Renovationis Causam*, Instruction on the renewal of religious Formation in the Novitiate, Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular institutes (1968).
- RH *Redemptor Hominis*, Encyclical of Pope John Paul II (1979).
- RMi *Redemptoris Missio*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II on the permanent validity of the Church's mission (1990).
- SDV *Summi Dei Verbum*, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI on the formation of Seminarians (1963).
- VC *Vita Consecrata*, John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation on the consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world (1996).
- VFC *Fraternal life in community*, Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (1994).
- SST *Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela*, Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio, by Pope John Paul II, promulgating norms on more grave delicts reserved to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2001).
- Ad exsequendam ecclesiasticam legem*, Letter to Bishops and other Ordinaries on new norms for Church handling of certain grave offenses, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2001).
- Istruzioni circa l'ammissione in seminario di candidati provenienti da altri seminari o Famiglie religiose*, XLV Assemblea Generale CEI, 8 Marzo 1996.
- Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic education concerning the criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to seminary and to Holy Orders*, 4 November 2005.
- Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 2008.

II. Xaverian Documents

- Anthology of the writings of Guido M. Conforti* (English translation on General Direction website).
- C *Xaverian Constitutions*, 1983.
- Const31 *Constitutions of the St. Francis Xavier Foreign Missions Society*, 1931.
- DP “Discorso ai Parenti”, in *Parola del Fondatore*.
- LS G.M. Conforti, *Lettere ai Saveriani*, 3 Vol. edited by Fr. Teodori, LS Rome, 1977.
- LT G.M. Conforti, *Testament Letter*, introduction to the 1931 Constitutions
- PF G.M. Conforti, *La Parola del Fondatore*, raccolta di lettere, Discorsi ai parenti, Conferenze ai Novizi, Ed. ISME, Parma 1966.
- PdP G.M. Conforti, *La Parola del Padre*, Esortazioni del Fondatore ai Saveriani, Ed. EMI, 1981.
- FR *Fundamental Rule*, passages selected from the 1931 Constitutions by the XI General Chapter (1983): see appendix to the new Constitutions.
- GR *General Rule*.
- RMX *Ratio Missionis Xaveriana*, XIV General Chapter, 2001.
- Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana*, Roma, 2006.
- XIII GC *General Chapter 1995*.
- XIV GC *General Chapter 2001*.
- XV GC *General Chapter 2007*.
- XVI GC *General Chapter 2013*.

N.B. *Vademecum*

The current RFX must be used with the “Vademecum, a practical guide for the application of ecclesial and Xaverian guidelines and norms”, which is regularly updated with guidelines from Xaverian Chapters and competent Church bodies.

The guidelines in the Vademecum possess the value attributed to them by the texts to which they refer.

INTRODUCTION

“For such an exalted task, the future missionary is to be prepared by a special spiritual and moral training. For he must have the spirit of initiative in beginning, as well as that of constancy in carrying through what he has begun; he must be persevering in difficulties, patient and strong of heart in bearing with solitude, fatigue, and fruitless labor. He will encounter men with an open mind and a wide heart; he will gladly take up the duties which are entrusted to him; he will with a noble spirit adapt himself to the people’s foreign way of doing things and to changing circumstances; while in the spirit of harmony and mutual charity, he will cooperate with his brethren and all who dedicate themselves to the same task, so that together with the faithful, they will be one heart and one soul in imitation of the apostolic community” (AG 25).

In this chapter

- o. INTRODUCTION
 - o.1 Purpose and value of the document
 - o.2 Meaning and limits of the document
 - o.3 Editing criteria



“All matters pertaining to formation are regulated by the General Directory of Formation (Ratio), compiled in conformity with Church directives and adapted to the concrete reality of the Xaverian family. It is periodically brought up to date either by the General Chapter, or by the General Direction acting upon the delegation of the General Chapter. The General Directory is complemented and contextualized more precisely in Regional Directories which must be approved by the General Direction” (GR 53:1).

0.1 Purpose and value of the document

1. The *Ratio* is a response to the need for unity in plurality and fidelity to the charism in Xaverian formation.

a. The variety of situations, the frequent change of formators and the constant new challenges in the Mission *ad gentes* demand some points of reference that manifest the unity of the one family in its various gifts, ministries and cultures (cf. C 5; 54) and sustain our dynamic fidelity to the charism (cf. C 52).

b. The *Ratio* is inspired by the Constitutions and is a point of reference for the *Ratio* of the Circumscriptions (cf. CIC 242–243), which will bear in mind some typical characteristics of their context, such as: the local culture and milieu, the condition of young people and suitable formation strategies and instruments.

0.2 Meaning and limits of the document

2. In harmony with the Church's high regard for the specific charisms of the Religious Institutes, as gifts to be developed in the Church for the service of humanity, the Xaverian Congregation constantly rediscovers its identity as a missionary community of men called to consecrate their lives to God for the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians (cf. C 1).

a. In order to ensure that this charism also pervades, enlightens and verifies the Xaverian formation proposal, this document reviews the essential contents and methods of Xaverian formation, on the basis of the Congregation's goals and living traditions as they are expressed in the Constitutions (cf. C 53).

b. The *Ratio* only deals with specifically Xaverian issues and, therefore, presupposes familiarity with the documents of the local and universal Church. Since it is a document of guiding principles, it does not necessarily touch upon all the juridical and practical elements connected with formation.

0.3 Editing criteria

3. The desire to promote unity in plurality and fidelity in historical continuity led to the choice of the following editorial criteria:

- a.** To understand and emphasize the specific nature of the Xaverian proposal, considering only what is essential and expressing it in a concise manner.
- b.** To value the Institute's living tradition and free it from mono-cultural categories so that it can be expressed in different cultures.
- c.** To seek pedagogical-formative categories that are open to the human, ecclesial and missionary needs of our times.

4. The present edition of the *Ratio* aims to give greater attention to some fundamental elements, such as:

- ongoing formation as the driving force of the entire formation process;
- the centrality of the candidate on the basis of his receptivity to formation;
- the importance of desire-affectivity in the formation process;
- interculturality as an essential element of missionary spirituality and activity;
- a greater ecclesial and missionary sensitivity.

5. On the basis of the global acceptance of the first edition of the RFX (1989), the present edition of the *Ratio* contains some structural changes and novelties:

- the first and second chapters have been slightly modified;
- the principle of *docibilitas* has been added to the formation principles (chapter 3);
- the current chapter 4, "Agents and instruments of formation", is completely new;
- chapter 5, which deals with the stages of Formation, has been completely redrafted. Bearing in mind the new formation situation in

the Congregation, and the current formation setup, the stages have been divided in a different way, whilst maintaining the schema of the five essential values for every stage.

6. In calling for a review of the RFX, the XV General Chapter asked that the new edition contain a suitable formation program for the Xaverian Brothers (XV GC 66c). A brief section has therefore been included with guidelines for the specific formation of the Xaverian Brother (cf. 313-318).

7. Since the world of young people is constantly changing, and in different ways according to each context, a description of their situation is left to the Circumscription *Ratio*.

Chapter One

**XAVERIAN FORMATION
IN THE MIND AND PRACTICE
OF THE FOUNDER**

“The life and the words of the Founder are a singular source of inspiration for our apostolic life” (C 1).

In this chapter

- 1.1 CONFORTI'S FORMATION PROGRAM
- 1.2 GUIDELINES GIVEN BY CONFORTI TO FORMATORS
 - Importance and sensitive nature of formation
 - The missionary motivation of formation work
 - Qualities of the Xaverian formator
 - The formation setting
- 1.3 DIMENSIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF CONFORTIAN FORMATION
 - A solid human formation
 - A wide, but not trivial, culture
 - A moderate and profound spirituality
 - Unity between consecration and mission
 - Sole and exclusive goal

1.1 Conforti's formation program

8. As a seminarian, Conforti was already involved in formation as the vice-rector of the diocesan seminary. After the foundation of the Institute (1895), despite his many diocesan commitments, the Founder personally took care of the young candidates of his first minor seminary in Borgo Leon d'Oro and, later, in the current Mother House. These first candidates were adolescents and young men at the grammar school and lyceum stages of their education, and they hailed mainly from the Diocese of Parma. From the very beginning, Conforti had a clear idea of the "sole and exclusive purpose" of his Institute (*Letter to Cardinal Ledochowski*, 1894; Rule, 1897-98) which excluded the admission of candidates "who showed no inclination for the demanding missionary life" (*Letter to Fr. Rastelli*, 23.12.1900).

9. Conforti loved to take part in community prayer and he was frequently the first one to enter, and the last one to leave, the chapel; he preached the morning meditation, took an interest in discipline and study and followed the students individually.

10. When his tasks as a bishop no longer allowed him to be constantly present among his young missionary aspirants, Bishop Conforti continued to show his interest in each and every one of them. He went to the Institute often, he loved to converse with the students during their recreation, he took an interest in each individual and he informed them about what was happening in China. He directed their retreats and conferences, he presided over the school exams and regularly received, first Fr. Pellegrini (1898-1911), and then Fr. Bonardi (1911-31) to discuss the affairs of the Mother House and the Institute with them.

11. In spite of his commitments, he frequently visited the other minor seminaries: Vicenza, Poggio S. Marcello, Grumone and Vallo della Lucania. He wanted to see with his own eyes how the communities and

the confreres were getting on; he received the students, often even the youngest students, for private conversations; he directed the meditation and gave helpful practical instructions to the Superiors of the house.

12. His constant concern for the formation of his future missionaries is clearly visible in the Constitutions and the conferences he gave to the Novices, as well as in his correspondence with the Rectors and the Prefects.

13. From these historical facts, and from eyewitness accounts, we can conclude that his formation style was attentive, meticulous, discreet and balanced. He was neither excessively formal nor aloof. Some of his former students remember him as “an unrivaled father and formator” (Fr. Guareschi), who “inspired great veneration” (Mgr. Del Monte). In 1905, Fr. Pietro Uccelli wrote: “He is truly a saint, a second Don Bosco. . . He is a great spiritual guide. . . He inspires great trust in us”.

1.2 Guidelines given by Conforti to formators

Importance and sensitive nature of formation

14. The Founder refers frequently to the missionary value of formation work, almost as if to instill in the formators he had called back from China a profound conviction of the value of this task, which is “no less important” (FR 25). For Conforti, formation consists in promoting and stimulating the harmonic growth of those who are “susceptible, like soft wax, to every impression” (*Letter to the prefect Gaetano La Face*, LS vol. 3, p. 122). He therefore invites the Xaverian formators to cultivate a considerate attention to, and a tireless love for, the young students, by encouraging them to strive for higher goals and to commit themselves with enthusiasm and perseverance.

The missionary motivation of formation work

15. For Conforti, the goal of vocation animation and Xaverian formation is to train new missionaries for the mission *ad gentes*. The mission, therefore, must be the fundamental formation criterion (cf. FR 3; RMX 87), the daily norm, motivating ideal, desired goal, reference point and a principle of critical self-examination. The entire formation setting must strive towards the mission and be pervaded by an apostolic spirit. Formators must therefore keep this goal firmly in their sights as the fundamental element of vocation discernment.

Qualities of the Xaverian formator

16. In the mind of Conforti, the qualities that a formator of future missionaries must possess, at least *in nuce*, and which he must personally cultivate, are:

- a.** a great respect for the young candidates in formation;
- b.** a great ability for intuition and understanding, in other words, a great love for each and every candidate. This love must become presence, patience, self-giving until sacrifice and the ability to follow and stimulate each individual to grow in fullness and generosity. In view of this, the Founder repeatedly insists on the importance of the personal formation dialogue (cf. *Letter to Fr. Uccelli*, 7:1:1923);
- c.** if possible, a good personal experience of missionary life and, in any case, a great apostolic heart and a profound desire for the mission;
- d.** a strong sense of belonging to the Xaverian Family, and a constantly renewed desire to work in unity with the other formators, in full harmony with the guidelines of the Congregation;
- e.** the ability to create a serious, committed and stimulating formation setting, which is neither overprotective nor excessively autonomous, but frank, open, demanding and joyful.

The formation setting

17. Conforti, as an expert formator, knows and emphasizes the crucial importance of a suitable community setting that is inspired by the Gospel. The main components of this formation setting are:

a. an atmosphere of zealous commitment to personal human-Christian growth, the most evident signs of which are: “a strong desire for personal sanctification” (FR 52); serious application to study-school; consistency, industriousness and resourcefulness;

b. a constant and joyful desire for a missionary proclamation that creates “an environment pervaded by an apostolic spirit” in the formation houses (*Letter to Fr. Uccelli*, 21.9.1924). According to Conforti, the characteristic signs of this are: “a strong desire for the salvation of souls” (FR 52), “an inclination to the missionary life” (*Letter to Fr. Rastelli*, 23.12.1900; Const31, 26), an “active lifestyle” (FR 53) and a “healthy competition with others in the acquisition of knowledge” (FR 55) in a loyal and profound manner;

c. a cordial fraternal and family atmosphere, where members emulate and help each other loyally, and where unity reigns together with zeal for work, joy and striving for the ideal. Conforti wrote to the Rector of Vicenza: “Resolve to govern the house with both fortiter and suaviter” (*Letter to Fr. Sartori*, 23.11.1919).

1.3 Dimensions and principles of the Confortian formation program

18. In the guidelines that Bishop Conforti gave to the formators, and in his recommendations to the students, we can observe some fundamental and recurring ideas.

A solid human formation

19. The Founder was well aware of the importance of the missionary’s human maturity for the good of the mission. He therefore wanted the missionary students to possess “good physical health”, “sound judgment” and a “balanced temperament that can easily relate to others” (FR 52); “a joyful outlook on life, natural ease in their behavior, courtesy, loyalty, strength of character, shunning deceit and insincerity and ever ready to accept new challenges and face any difficulties” (FR 69).

A wide, but not trivial, culture

20. The Founder wanted his missionaries to possess a culture that is “wide, but not trivial” (FR 53) and “useful for responding to the multiple needs of the mission” (FR 57). Missionaries must be “light” (FR 23) and for this reason they are encouraged to study the sacred and profane sciences and foreign languages “in order to become useful instruments for the salvation of souls” (FR 57). Conforti advised departing missionaries to take with them “a sufficient number of useful books” (FR 58).

21. Besides the sciences, Conforti invites his missionaries to develop any practical aptitudes and “all other forms of knowledge that might be useful” (FR 57) in the missionary life.

22. Conforti also constantly reminds his future missionaries that openness of spirit is an indispensable quality; he expresses this in the invitation to embrace St. Paul’s program to welcome “everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure” (Ph 4:8), to deepen their knowledge of the different local cultures, to prepare, if possible, monographs “for the benefit and instruction of the confreres and others” (FR 17) and to study the local language “with special care, in order to learn and speak it fluently as quickly as possible” (FR 16).

A moderate and profound spirituality

23. Human virtues and cultural preparation are not enough for the missionary. Since his behavior is inspired by faith, he also needs a solid spirituality that is capable of withstanding any conflict and unexpected event. Consequently, Conforti asks that those who are training for the apostolic life should possess a spirit of faith and a spiritual life that will enable them to grow through the exercise of the ministry; the missionary must “attend to his own sanctification, that he may better work for the sanctification of others” (FR 18).

24. Conforti therefore insists on the necessity of fidelity to indispensable moments of formal prayer (cf. TL 8); missionaries should “hold in high esteem everything that nourishes the supernatural life, above all the sacraments, which are the sources and the channels of sanctifying grace, which unites us to God and transforms us in him” (FR 20). Through his personal example, and the use of practical and profound formulas, Conforti demonstrates the necessary union between the contemplative and the active life.

25. At the heart of his spirituality, as the value that consolidates our life, Conforti places the spirit of living faith, which accustoms us to “see God, seek God, love God in all” (PdP 9) and to keep Christ in mind in all circumstances and at all times. Thus faith will truly become the norm for the missionary’s behavior, shaping his thoughts, intentions, sentiments, words and actions (cf. TL 7).

Unity between consecration and mission

26. Convinced that contemplation is the source and the nourishment of the apostolate, Bishop Conforti wants for himself, and for his missionaries, an intimate union between the mission and religious consecration. He sees the latter as a radical gift of self to God in order to become “a voluntary victim for the salvation of the pagans” (FR 9) like Christ who, on the Cross, gives himself entirely so that the total and definitive gift of Love might be made manifest and reach all men and women.

Sole and exclusive purpose

27. Since the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians is the supreme and sole purpose of the Institute, zeal for the missionary apostolate must inspire the entire life of all its members (cf. FR 1; 3; 7-9). In view of this, they must “give the best of themselves, *oboedientia duce*, to this most noble goal” (FR 6), avoiding anything that might distract them from it. Therefore, for every young man who consecrates his life in

the Xaverian Family, the mission *ad gentes* becomes the basic, total and exclusive option of his entire life.

28. In order to fulfill his great missionary purpose, Bishop Conforti insists on certain indispensable human virtues for a fruitful encounter with others, such as calm, courtesy, loyalty, joy, steadfastness, the ability to enter into relationships and dialogue with others, strength of spirit in order to face joyfully any struggles and difficulties for the glory of God and the good of others (cf. FR 69). “The missionary must be patient, kind and shrewd; he must not seek his own self-interest, but only the glory of Christ: he endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things and rises above all things, persevering in this spirit until death” (FR 15). The missionary must be able to proclaim more with his behavior than with his words and this will come about if “in all his dealings with people, he strives to behave in the same way as Christ, his model, would behave in similar circumstances” (FR 14).

Chapter Two

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF XAVERIAN SPIRITUALITY

“It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders’ spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions, all of which make up the patrimony of each institute, be faithfully held in honor” (PC 2).

In this chapter

- 2.1 INTRODUCTION: A CHARISM TO HAND ON TO OTHERS
 - Conforti's spiritual journey
 - Reliving the charism in a spirit of listening

- 2.2 CARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS
 - Christ, our incomparable model
 - Sent like Him
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- 2.3 FOUNDATIONS OF XAVERIAN SPIRITUALITY
 - Spirit of living faith
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- 2.4 ESSENTIAL DIMENSIONS AND ULTIMATE GOALS
 - Christocentrism
 - Missionary purpose
 - Religious dimension
 - Family characteristic
 - The Xaverian's humanity

2.1 Introduction: a charism to hand on to others

29. The roots of the Xaverian family lie in Conforti's experience of the Spirit, an experience that every Xaverian must make his own and communicate to those who, feeling called by God, ask to become members of our missionary family (cf. C 52).

30. This founding experience "lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth" (MR 11), is an important element of our identity and the source of unity among the members, whatever their age and origin.

Conforti's spiritual journey

31. Conforti's spiritual journey began with his encounter with the crucified Christ to whom, in his own words — "I owe my vocation". "I looked at Him and He looked at me and it seemed He was saying many things to me"; this is the expression that sums up this experience of faith and love, which gives birth to a growing need for reciprocity and totality.

32. In the Crucifix, Conforti discovers God's love for all: anyone who truly experiences this love cannot fail to be conquered by it and become its messenger.

33. Other episodes of Conforti's spiritual journey:

- a.** his reading of the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith;
- b.** the knowledge of Francis Xavier and the consequent discovery that apostolic radicalness knows no boundaries, and that the Gospel can be proclaimed to the most distant peoples of the earth;
- c.** the overwhelming obstacles that prevented him from going to the missions and which motivated him to embrace audacious projects;
- d.** the growing awareness of having received an inspiration "from none other than God" (*Letter to Cardinal Ledochowski*, 09.03.1894).

34. Conforti, still a young man, describes the foundation of the Institute as “the project that I have been dreaming of for a very long time” (*Letter to Fr. Venturini*, 11.08.1889), “the greatest and most noble goal to which I constantly aspire from the bottom of my heart” (*Letter to his Mother*, 19.02.1891).

35. These many providential events weave the plot of his experience as Founder, leading him ever more towards the irresistible demand of total self-giving, radicalness and universality: “I will sacrifice my entire self, my belongings and whatever else I have in order to succeed in this holy venture (...) although I am aware of my nothingness, I will not be dismayed by any contradiction or difficulty, trusting instead in the Divine Heart that beat and suffered for all the peoples of the earth” (*Letter to Cardinal Ledochowski*, 09.03.1894).

Fr. Vanzin wrote: “he became a missionary out of an inner need” (*Padre di missionari*, ISME 1941, p. 9). The “original intuition of Conforti gives birth to an almost automatic, serene, immediate identification between the interior life and the missionary commitment” (Manfredi A., *Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana*, Roma, 2006, p. 153).

Reliving the charism in a spirit of listening

36. The fundamental task of the Xaverian is to know and relive Conforti’s experience of the Spirit. It is the formators’ great and indispensable duty to communicate the charism “by word and example” (C 52). The Xaverian Family asks its formators to present the charism to young people as a life project and to verify whether or not they are called to live it.

37. In order to communicate his experience, the Founder chose a strong and concise expression of St. Paul: “Caritas Christi urget nos” (2Cor 5:14).

2.2 Caritas Christi urget nos

Christ, our incomparable model

“We will live this way if in all circumstances we keep Christ in mind; he will always be with us, when we pray, at the altar, when we study, in the many activities of our ministry, in our dealings with others, in times of distress, sorrow and temptation. In all things we will draw inspiration from him, in such a way that our external behavior will become the manifestation of the interior life of Christ within us” (TL 7).

38. Conforti places Christ at the heart of his life and spirituality. He uses the suggestive language of the letter to the Hebrews: “turn your minds to Jesus” (Heb 12:2), “the apostle and the high priest of our religion” (Heb 3:1).

39. Conforti reminds the Novice Masters to “exhort the novices to keep Christ always before their eyes as an incomparable model of holiness for all but, in a special way, for the apostle. The novices are to conform their thoughts, affections and actions to the divine example in such a way that Christ becomes visible through them, as recommended by the Apostle” (FR 67; cf. TL 7; PdP 45; 37).

40. In the contemplation of Christ, who died and rose again for all, we clearly see God’s overwhelming and passionate love for all: for our sake “he did not spare his own Son” (Rm 8:32). In Christ we see the Father’s overwhelming desire to live in solidarity with all, in order to reconcile them “in a new and eternal covenant” (Mk 14:24; Col 1:20; Lk 22:20). “Through his crucifixion, Christ has reconciled humanity with God and joined together, with a sole bond of love, all the scattered children of the first father. St. Alphonsus rightly wrote these words at the foot of a Crucifix: This is true love” (PdP 39). In Christ, therefore, we see the unlimited horizons of the Kingdom of God at work in human history. *Caritas Christi* is the origin, support, model and dynamic strength of the mission.

Sent like Him

“The importance of this event must not pass us by unnoticed; therefore, we must strive to fulfill the sublime goals of the Institute, working with ever increasing zeal for the spreading of the Gospel among the infidels, thus giving our own modest contribution to the fulfillment of Christ’s wish: the formation of a single Christian family embracing all humanity” (TL 1).

41. The experience of the love of Christ “who died for all” (2Cor 5:14), inspires us to proclaim him especially to those who have not yet been reached by the Gospel of the Kingdom, which is present and at work in Christ. “You are inspired by the example of the One who gave his entire self for us: *tradidit semetipsum pro nobis*, and who commanded us to love others as he loved us: *sicut dilexi vos*” (DP 19).

“This has taught us love: that he gave up his life for us and we, too, ought to give up our lives for our brothers” (1Jn 3:16).

“This is the only reason for your going there. You are not motivated by the love of human glory or avidity for earthly riches, the desire to see new lands, new peoples and customs. *Caritas Christi urget nos* sums up your aspirations. Win everyone over to Christ with the persuasion and the power of love” (DP 22).

42. Zeal is the word that Conforti uses often to express the inner force that motivates the missionary: zeal is “the love of God in action” (FR 15). It expresses the motivation and the urgent need that is born of the awareness of being sent as “ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us” (2Cor 5:20). This urgency becomes total gift of self without measure, foolishness for God (cf. 2Cor 5:13; 11:1-2), an inspired creativity and tireless activity. “Since the exclusive purpose of the Institute is the conversion of the pagans, zeal for the salvation of souls must be the missionary’s distinguishing feature” (FR 15).

43. Zeal is born of the experience of God's love for each one of us and for the entire human race, and it is nourished by the vision of faith in relation to all situations, since the mystery of the suffering Christ perpetuates itself in human history.

44. Missionary zeal demands and calls for strength of soul, spirit of sacrifice, the ability to adapt, creativity and resourcefulness, courage, patience, joy. Just like love, of which it is the expression, "it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes" (1Cor 13:7).

45. The uniqueness and exclusivity of our missionary commitment are expressed in our specific mission vow.

Following Him

"Every one of us should be intimately persuaded that the vocation to which we have been called could not be greater or more noble; it draws us close to Christ, the author and consummator of our faith, and to the Apostles who, leaving everything behind, pledged themselves entirely and without reserve to following Christ. They are the best models for our life. The Lord could not have been more benevolent towards us! The apostolic life, combined with the profession of the religious vows, is in itself the most perfect life possible according to the Gospel" (TL 1–2).

46. "In order to live out our mission consecration in a more radical way, we follow Christ in vowed poverty, chastity and obedience. The apostolate and religious life together constitute our sole and indissoluble charism" (C 18).

47. This choice is repeatedly asserted and defended by Conforti, it sums up his intuition and distinguishes it from other, equally legitimate, forms

of commitment to the mission. Formation, therefore, must ensure that it is understood in all its depth and in its practical consequences.

48. Conforti defines religious life as “a holy folly of the cross constantly expressed in our actions” (PdP 94). “Let those who make profession of the evangelical counsels seek and love above all else God who has first loved us (cf. 1Jn 4:10), and let them strive to foster in all circumstances a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col 3:3). This love of God both enkindles and empowers the love of one’s neighbor that contributes to the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. This love animates and guides the practice of the evangelical counsels” (PC 6).

49. “Through the profession of the religious vows we die to all earthly things in order to live a life hidden in God with Jesus Christ, thus fulfilling what the apostle Paul wrote to the early believers: *Mortui estis et vita vestra est abscondita cum Christo in Deo* (Col 3:3)” (TL 2).

Paul continues: “He died for all so that living men should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them” (2Cor 5:15). This context of a profound experience of the Spirit gives life to the quest for a radical life in which one gives not only the fruit, but the entire plant (cf. TL 2), the full and irrevocable gift that is similar to martyrdom, the beginning of a new life that is equivalent “in a certain sense to a second baptism” (TL 2; cf. LG 42).

50. The foundation of our vocation is Christ, who became poor in order to make all rich (cf. C 25) and was obedient until death (C 31), entirely and exclusively dedicated to the Father for the Kingdom (cf. C 20): “the apostolate and religious life together constitute our sole and indissoluble charism” (C 18).

One family

"We must love God above all else, and foster a heartfelt love for ourselves and our brothers, especially those who are members of the same religious family and share our life, struggles, merits, direction and all else, whilst we prepare to share one day the same heavenly reward" (TL 9).

51. "Through the Founder, the Lord has gathered us into one religious family so that the Church, the new brotherhood in union with Christ, may be made present among non-Christians. As a family we share everything (...) We bear visible and credible witness to our brotherhood by living in a local community. In community we share, forgive, celebrate and experience conversion" (C 35-36). The love of Christ, which inspires us to announce the Kingdom to non-Christians, makes us share everything and become one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 4:32).

52. For Conforti, the reason for our being a family lies in Christ. By virtue of his love, we rediscover ourselves as new creatures and brothers, not by flesh and blood, but because we have died with Him and have been born anew in God (cf. 2Cor 5:16-17; Jn 1:13). Brothers are those who listen to the Word and put it into practice (cf. Lk 8:21; 11:28).

53. This new reality, founded and marked by the "love of Christ, which is by far superior to any natural affection" (TL 11), has a great missionary and eschatological value that anticipates and fulfills "Christ's wish to form a single family that embraces the whole of humanity" (TL 1). The community-family becomes a sign and experience of the universal fraternity desired by Christ and for which he was "lifted up" (cf. Jn 12:32). The missionary, who is "the most beautiful symbol, the most convinced and zealous apostle of universal brotherhood" (DP 22), becomes with his brothers in the apostolate a sign of the Kingdom, the prophecy of fulfilled humanity, a proclamation of, and witness to, the One Triune God, who calls every person to communion with him and with all men and women (cf. C 8; 14; DP 22).

54. For Xaverians, the mission is not an individual activity, but the task of the community, and each confrere is called to participate in the one mission of the Congregation (cf. RMX 19-20; 29-33).

2.3 Foundations of Xaverian spirituality

“The distinguishing characteristic of the present and future members of the Society must be the result of the following components: a spirit of living faith which enables us to see God, seek God, love God in all things, intensifying our desire to spread his kingdom everywhere; a spirit of prompt and ready obedience in everything, no matter how costly, in order to achieve the victories promised by God to those who are obedient; a spirit of intense love for our religious family” (TL 10).

Spirit of living faith

55. Faith is the “the absolute norm for our conduct” (TL 7) and, without a doubt, one of the most characteristic and typical elements of Confortian spirituality; our formation must give it the greatest attention.

56. In the mind of Conforti, the apostolate is impossible without the contemplation of God’s action in history and in daily events (cf. C 44).

57. Confortian contemplation is the ability to judge people, things and events in a new and prophetic manner, in the light of the Gospel, living in confident abandonment to God and in a profound availability to his salvific will (cf. C 32; 44; 58; TL 7; FR 18-19; 65-68). For the missionary, every person is an image of God to be discovered and revealed.

58. The episcopal motto of Bishop Conforti, “In omnibus Christus” (Col 3:11), is a very powerful formation principle for the missionary. The Spirit of Christ is at work in history, sowing in abundance the values of the Kingdom. The missionary must have a prophetic and penetrating vision

in order to discover God and his Kingdom present and active before his arrival, and even before the arrival of the Church.

59. This vision of God, who is loved and sought in all things, becomes zeal and tireless apostolic dedication; in other words, love and a concrete commitment to the integral liberation of each and every person: “we direct our efforts among non-Christians, in a particular way, to the privileged ones of the Kingdom: the poor, the weak, the marginalized, and victims of injustice and oppression” (C 9).

60. For the Xaverian, the apostolate is the place of his habitual union with God (cf. C 63), which is nourished by his fidelity to personal and community prayer, reflection and contemplation; these are essential if he is to persevere in faith and they are indispensable for his apostolic life. Indeed, prayer “is the principal activity of the missionary” (C 43).

Spirit of Obedience

61. Christ, the missionary of the Father, is the nearest to God’s heart (cf. Jn 1:18); his food is to do the will of the Father (Jn 4:34) and he does only what he sees the Father doing (cf. Jn 5:19ff). Sent by Christ, as Christ was sent by the Father (cf. Jn 20:21), the Xaverian must learn to make the Father’s will the norm of his own life (cf. C 31). This will is made visible through the mediation of the Xaverian’s community, the entire Xaverian Family and the Church (cf. FT 9; 20e).

62. The spirit of obedience is fulfilled through: availability (cf. C 33), submission to the orders of the lawful superiors (cf. C 34), the joyful acceptance of their decisions in a spirit of active and generous collaboration of all (cf. C 32), acceptance of our personal history, interpretation of God’s will in events (cf. C 32; 58), listening to, and collaboration with, the Christian and human community in which we are called to work (cf. C 44).

63. For Conforti, obedience is also expressed through a “profound veneration”, “unconditional loyalty”, and “sincere devotion” towards the Church and her Pastors (cf. TL 6). For the Xaverian, love and ecclesial fidelity are essential for his evangelical authenticity and apostolic efficacy (cf. FR 11; 42; C 11; 33).

Family spirit

64. In Conforti’s mind, the community dimension of the religious life, and the ecclesial dimension of the missionary commitment, are marked by a personal and dynamic human relationship. The Institute is not a functional structure for organization and departure for the missions, but a Family that we must love “like a mother” (TL 10); it is not an abstract entity, but a community of persons we must love as brothers.

65. Harmony is expressed in sharing everything, “life, struggles, merits, direction” (TL 9; cf. C 35); our life together means sharing the joys and sufferings of all and of each individual. Fraternal affection becomes concrete attention to each brother, to his growth and his personal uniqueness. Conforti expresses these relationships in words that the Xaverian tradition has handed down to us: “love each other like brothers (...) and respect each other like princes” (*Conference to the Novices*, 4 May 1921).

66. The family spirit is nourished and expressed through an obedience that is “prompt and ready in everything, no matter how costly” and in a “spirit of intense love for all the members of our Society” (TL 10). The latter is the distinguishing sign of discipleship (cf. Jn 13:35) and of the new fraternity in Christ and, as such, it is a proclamation of, and witness to, the Kingdom of God present in human history (cf. TL 9-10; FR 45-47).

2.4 Essential dimensions and ultimate goals

67. The character of the Xaverian, as it is described by Conforti (especially in the Testament Letter and the Constitutions), and as it emerges from the

reflection on his specific charism, takes concrete form in five essential values. These are the constant principles and goals of the formation offered to those who wish to serve the Kingdom of God in the Xaverian Family.

Christocentrism

“Our formation project takes Christ, the perfect man, as its life model. It aims at the integral and harmonious formation of persons motivated by a living faith as friendship with the Lord, the ability to view life events in the light of the Gospel, unshakeable hope in our apostolic commitment, and an industrious love extending to the complete gift of self” (C 58).

68. The Xaverian formator proposes Christ as our unique model and his task is to lead candidates to the ability to see Christ everywhere, “in prayer, at the altar, in study, in the many ministerial activities, in dealings with others, in times of distress, sorrow and temptation” (TL 7).

69. This entails:

- a. a profound personal experience of Christ, the missionary of the Father, the poor, chaste, obedient, crucified and risen Son; the perfect Man; our Master and elder brother. The Missionary must “always keep him in mind” (TL 7) in order to imitate his example” (FR 14; Const31, 25);
- b. an apostolic spirituality with a social dimension, incarnated and universal, which is nourished by contemplation and the imitation of Christ, the poor and working servant (cf. Mt 25:31-46), and which gives priority, among the non-Christians, to the poor, the foreigners, the marginalized and the pagans, to proclaim the Good News to them and show them the signs of the coming Kingdom (cf. C 9; 14);
- c. a harmonious Christocentrism:
 - Christ to be *encountered* in people and in history (cultures, religions, life of the people);

- Christ to be *listened* to in the Word, since “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (St. Jerome, DV 25; cf. C 44);
- Christ to be *announced* as Good News until the very ends of the earth;
- Christ to be *celebrated* in the Eucharist, as the living victim for the salvation of the world and as a presence that invites us to adoration and self-giving (cf. C 46);
- Christ to be *awaited* in active vigilance until he has handed over the Kingdom to the Father and God will be all in all (cf. 1Cor 15: 24; 28).

70. Our inspiring examples of discipleship and apostolic zeal are: the Virgin Mary, the apostles and the great missionaries, especially St. Francis Xavier (cf. C 49-50), St. Therese of Lisieux (cf. Bishop Conforti, *Panegyric*, 18:11:1923), our Holy Founder and the life of many confreres who gave themselves entirely to the mission.

Missionary purpose

“By virtue of our specific charism, we are sent to proclaim the Gospel to non-Christians beyond the boundaries of our own cultural milieu and local Church. Faithful to Christ’s own option, we direct our efforts among non-Christians, in a particular way, to the privileged ones of the Kingdom: the poor, the weak, the marginalized, and victims of oppression and injustice” (C 9).

71. The Xaverian formator helps candidates to grow in the missionary vocation as a personal and exclusive commitment to the evangelization of non-Christians (cf. C 17), making their own the desire of Christ to build a human family in which there is “one flock and one Shepherd” (Jn 10:16). This becomes concrete in a love that is *kenosis*, incarnation, solidarity, proclamation, witness, dialogue and liberation (cf. C 12-14).

72. The fundamental missionary attitudes are:

- a.** a spirit of faith;
- b.** detachment, departure (cf. C 9; 19);
- c.** a spirit of service, gratuitousness, listening, patience;
- d.** zeal, perseverance, the courage to compare ourselves with religious and cultural differences;
- e.** creativity (cf. C 4), poverty, the ability to share and live in communion with others;
- f.** preferential choice of the non-Christians, the least and those who are most distant;
- g.** commitment to justice and liberation (cf. C 8; 56);
- h.** the ability to engage in dialogue, rejoice at the discovery of the *semina Verbi* (AG 11; NAe 2) and to collaborate in the inculturation of the Christian message.

73. In a special way, formation must give importance to the preparation of the departure *ad extra* through the many detachments that are required of us by life, fraternal community life, study and the various formation stages.

Religious dimension

“In order to live out our religious consecration in a more radical way, we follow Christ in vowed poverty, chastity and obedience. The apostolate and religious life together constitute our sole and indissoluble charism” (C 18).

74. The formator must help candidates to cultivate “a high regard for the apostolic life, bringing them to an understanding of the profession of the evangelical counsels, combined with the consecration of their life to the mission, as the most worthy and sublime life possible, since it most perfectly resembles the work of the Redeemer” (FR 65).

75. For the Xaverian, the vows have a powerful Christological, apostolic and community meaning:

- a.** they are a concrete expression of our identity as disciples who are sent out: “Jesus appointed twelve to be his companions and to be sent out to preach” (Mk 3:14-15) and they, “leaving everything behind, pledged themselves entirely and without reserve to follow Christ” (TL 1);
- b.** by virtue of the vows, we embrace the choices of Christ, and we relive and prolong the total gift of Christ to the Father in order to gather his scattered children. With Christ we become voluntary victims for the conversion of the world (cf. FR 9; Const31, 197) and by sharing in his suffering we contribute to the fulfillment of God’s salvific plan (cf. Col 1:24);
- c.** the vows bind us not only to God, but also to the brothers that Christ has given to us in the Xaverian community.

76. The vows, whose roots lie in Baptism, are a response of evangelical radicalness in a specific community of brothers consecrated to God for the mission *ad gentes*. They are a proclamation of the coming Kingdom and a denunciation of everything that opposes it.

77. Our *mission* vow is the total dedication of our life and consecration to the first proclamation of Christ’s Gospel (cf. C 17-19).

78. Poverty is “the first sacrifice Christ demands of those who aspire to perfection and desire to follow him more closely” (TL 4). It should be lived with an apostolic spirit, through total sharing, in fraternal solidarity and with a profound trust in Divine Providence, embracing the suffering of the cross, but also in a joyful freedom of spirit (cf. FR 33; 38-39).

79. Chastity is self-fulfillment through exclusive dedication to Christ and the total gift of self to others, and it is a source of wonder and apostolic fecundity. It should be lived with a spirit of self-restraint and vigilance, but also of peace, inner freedom and joy (cf. TL 2; 5; FR 28-29; 31).

80. Obedience is total availability to God's plans, even until the sacrifice of self, a *relinquere se ipsum* that is more difficult than the *relinquere sua*, which frees us from individualism and immerses us in a life-giving communion. It should be lived in a spirit of communal thinking, planning and working, both within the Xaverian community and in the wider ecclesial community (cf. TL 6; C 11).

Family characteristic

"Through the Founder, the Lord has gathered us into one religious family, so that the Church, the new brotherhood in union with Christ, may be made present among non-Christians. As a family we share everything: faith, apostolic commitment, hopes, joys, concerns, spiritual and material goods. The confreres chosen to exercise the service of authority are, first and foremost, signs and animators of communion" (C 35).

81. "For us, communion is an inalienable element" (RMX 30) that must be visible in our daily life. The formation community must grow as a family in which everyone, albeit with different roles and responsibilities, feels committed to the one Xaverian vocation and the building of a community that can be a real sign of the communion between man and God and with each other (cf. C 8).

82. Our communities are a reality of faith and grace. They:

- a. are not based on flesh and blood (partiality, spontaneous friendship, good will, nationality, culture), but on the Word of God and the love of Christ, which is "by far superior to any natural affection" (TL 11; cf. C 36; MX 29:1);
- b. strive to live evangelical fidelity and apostolic availability as a family of disciples;

- c. are apostolically committed to announce and bear witness to Christ's prophecy "that all mankind will become a single family, where there will be one fold and one Shepherd" (DP 22);
- d. are welcoming and open, in true missionary style, to the local human milieu in which they live, to the local Church in which they work and to other Xaverian communities (cf. C 36).

83. Fundamental attitudes of a life of fraternal communion (cf. TL 9-11; FR 45-48; 52; 55; 62; C 35-39):

- a. sharing of life, work and faith in fidelity to commitments and community moments;
- b. mutual acceptance, respect, mercy, sincerity, solidarity, apostolic friendship;
- c. the joy of living together, a sense of belonging, an intense love for the family, sharing in its joys and sorrows;
- d. a sense of communion with the local and universal Church.

The Xaverian's humanity

"The Founder wanted his missionaries to possess broad vision, a rich and balanced personality capable of adaptation, and a cultural formation consistent with the demands of our mission. Faithful to his desire, we cultivate a creative spirit, free from bias and prejudice about people, cultures, ambience and methods of evangelization" (C 4).

84. The Xaverian life project, which expresses the "evangelical intentions" (ET 11) and Confortian spirituality, is demanding and it cannot be built upon sand. "These gifts of grace find their foundation in a personality endowed with a balanced character, loyalty, serenity, creativity, altruism, ability to listen, with a welcoming and sharing attitude towards others" (C 58), as well as a thorough cultural preparation (cf. C 72).

85. In the image of Christ, the “perfect man” (GS 22), the Xaverian participates in the human journey of every person who seeks the truth and strives for justice and freedom, especially of those who are unjustly deprived of these rights.

86. Characteristics of the Xaverian’s humanity (cf. FR 14; 23; 31; 52ff; 58-60; 69; 84):

- a.* a steady, strong and balanced character, consideration for others, cordiality, common sense;
- b.* the ability to dialogue, collaborate and plan together;
- c.* industriousness, resourcefulness and creativity;
- d.* solidarity and love for justice;
- e.* frankness, discretion and a sense of limits;
- f.* the will to grow, learn and improve himself;
- g.* a vision of life inspired by hope;
- h.* a sense of joyful fulfillment in his vocation.

Chapter Three

FUNDAMENTAL FORMATION PRINCIPLES

“In order that formation might respond fully to the needs of human nature, it must perfect the entire man, who is composed of matter and spirit, mind and heart, and it is a very grave error, whose woeful consequences are incalculable, to separate one from the other.

The mind is made for truth, which is its natural nourishment, the heart is made for goodness, which is its appropriate goal and to which it must constantly strive; we must therefore sow the seeds of truth in the young generations, reawaken the precepts of justice in consciences and inculcate the unchanging holy principles of virtue in the heart” (Guido M. Conforti, Pastoral Letter on religious formation, 1910).

In this chapter

3.1 DOCIBILITAS

3.2 PLURALITY IN UNITY: INTERNATIONALITY AND INTERCULTURALITY

3.3 GRADUALITY AND PROGRESSIVITY

3.4 INCARNATION AND SOLIDARITY

3.5 GLOBALITY

3.1 Docibilitas

“Our fidelity to the Kingdom of God, to humanity and the mission, calls us to an ongoing spiritual renewal, to perfect ourselves in the contents and methods of the apostolate. Our community life and apostolic work are the privileged place, the source and the stimulus of our ongoing conversion and growth” (C 72).

87. Formation is a sole, integral process that embraces, in its various aspects, the entire life journey of each individual. Consequently, it demands, “readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives” (VC 69). In order to ensure that this takes place, we must have a fundamental vision of life as vocation, the willingness to be challenged, a constant verification of our response and a desire for our own human and spiritual growth; in short, we need a right vocational intention. Without these fundamental attitudes, any change will be superficial, contrived and, inevitably, a facade.

88. Normally, candidates possess these convictions only in a rudimentary manner. It is the task of formation to make them become explicit and vital, through a long process that is not always linear, in the progressive discovery of God’s wonderful action in the life of each person. It is fundamentally important that candidates be open to change and to learn, qualities that enable them to listen to God and perceive his mediations, thus enabling them to learn and grow in every stage and circumstance of life.

3.2 Plurality in unity: internationality and interculturality

“Our formation embraces and adapts itself to the diverse settings and ecclesial situations it encounters. It dialogues with other cultures, while recognizing their values and limitations. It finds its unity in the Xaverian life project and in the life of the Xaverian family within which each Region enjoys ample freedom for its own creative input” (C 54). “After more than a century of life, our Institute seems to be entering a new phase. Thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit and the discernment of our predecessors who introduced our charism to new cultures, the Congregation is now a more diversified and International body than ever before” (RMX 4).

89. Today, the Xaverian Congregation is open to the contributions of different cultures, but it must remain faithful to itself and, therefore, be a Family gathered in Christ for the first proclamation.

In order to safeguard the diversity and, at the same time, the identity of the Xaverian Family, formation must promote harmony between plurality and unity, whilst bearing in mind a multitude of factors, especially of the local culture and society in which it is situated and of which the candidates are bearers. We must learn to reinterpret the Xaverian charism in the light of the culture and the current ecclesial reality, in order to ensure that it responds to the concrete call of God and to enrich it with new values and new historical expressions (cf. XVI GC 79; 82–85).

90. To combine plurality and unity is a fundamental demand of catholicity and a vital characteristic of the missionary, who is called by vocation to proclaim the Gospel and be a sign of the universality of the Christian message of unity and reconciliation in different places, situations, experiences, races and cultures.

91. In order to provide a formation that is suitable to the local cultures and, at the same time, homogeneous, the various Circumscriptions will draw up their own *Ratio* and make every effort to translate the Founder's writings into the local language, together with any publications that may promote a greater participation in the daily life of the Congregation.

Interculturality and formation

92. The Founder asks that candidates possess "a balanced temperament that can easily relate to others" (FR 52). This guideline is even more crucial today in the context of an intercultural community. The ability to live in an intercultural community is a criterion of vocational discernment and it must enlighten, not only the daily life of the community and the Congregation, but the entire formation journey too (cf. XVI GC 93).

93. Formation must be based on the awareness that interculturality is a positive reality and value for the mission (cf. XVI GC 97). Embraced in this manner, it becomes witness and is able to bring about profound changes in the mission, freeing it from forms of evangelization that are tied to particular cultures or historical periods, and bringing it into line with its original meaning of a "disarmed" and humble proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

94. In order to ensure that interculturality is enriching and concretely feasible, a good degree of maturity and an attitude of ongoing conversion are both necessary. It is easier to love, understand, feel understood, welcome and listen to those who are similar to us by geographical or cultural affinity, whilst diversity can easily become a justification for our own prejudices, difficulties and sins (cf. XVI GC 87–88).

95. A religious family is not governed by the laws of politics, where the majority wins, but by our efforts to accept each other and our sharing in view of community growth.

96. A formative and spiritual proposal that aims to be missionary and intercultural must be based upon the following:

a. Theological dimension

- With its proposal of an encounter with Christ and discipleship, the Gospel creates a true and proper point of reference for culture (cf. VC 80) in which the consecrated life finds a response to cultural differences in the assimilation of the sentiments of the Son (cf. VC 66).

b. Ecclesial dimension

- The general guidelines of the Church concerning religious, priestly and missionary formation.

c. Anthropological dimension

- The ability to relativize our own culture and allow it to be assessed in a critical manner, whilst still appreciating it; acculturation and helping the Churches in their process of inculturation (cf. C 10);
- the ability to perceive the positive and good intentions of others, rather than their errors and shortcomings;
- humility and patience in order to overcome inevitable difficulties and suffering, and a constant spiritual effort to overcome defects (for example, excessive irritability) that prevent us from living interculturality with serenity.

d. Xaverian dimension

- The charism, the Founder, the Constitutions, our various legislative texts and the Congregation's living tradition;
- a sense of belonging to the Congregation and interest in the life of the Circumscription;
- strong missionary zeal.

97. The intercultural community is to take its local context as a reference point in connection with the life of the Church, study, language, food, lifestyle, etc. (cf. RMX 45.2; XVI GC 100), without ignoring the richness and the contribution of the different experiences and cultures.

3.3 Graduality and progressivity

“The formation process unfolds in a progressive and unified manner in order to form persons capable of responsible behavior. This requires that the formator exercise patience, courage and optimism, in making more exacting demands upon those in his charge. The formandi are to respond with an even greater personal involvement and, through gradual internalization, adopt the values proposed as their own” (C 55).

98. Graduality and formational progressivity are the fundamental principle of a diversified and pluralistic missionary formation.

99. This principle implies:

- a. the need to know, respect and accompany the candidates in their personal growth and in their social-cultural context;
- b. a clear perception of the goals of the formation process, combined with a correct mediation of the specific demands required by concrete situations, and decided upon in accordance with the level of growth achieved by the candidates and the community;
- c. an ongoing verification of the personal development of the individual candidates in relation to the values and the goals to be achieved;
- d. community dialogue;
- e. an open relationship with the Superior, formator and spiritual director;
- f. a profound harmony of programs and intentions among the formators of the same formation community, as well as among those of different formation levels.

3.4 Incarnation and solidarity

“Formation to the mission requires that we begin to embody in our lives the ideals to which we aspire; it demands, therefore, that we establish ourselves in missionary areas and situations, and show solidarity with the outcast and marginalized” (C 56).

100. The plan of God, expressed in Christ, reveals and fulfills itself in specific social contexts that are made up of cultures, historical processes, ideologies, movements, minorities, struggles and human journeys.

101. The example of Jesus, who became one of us in his incarnation, demands that we too live in solidarity with the brothers to whom we are sent, and to whom we wish to proclaim the Gospel of God's love, sharing their real life in all humility and sincerity. This presence requires the contemplative ability to recognize the historical place in which God makes himself present and works among us.

102. Candidates must be initiated into the discovery and the recognition of God present in history and at work in human reality.

103. This requires:

- a.** a positive identification with our own cultural and social milieu in order to share "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor" (GS 1) and in order to learn to be sensitive to problems and "to denounce prudently and firmly" the "violations of human rights, whatever their origin" (GR 14,3);
- b.** a habitual empathy with the people, local culture and the people's way of living the faith, avoiding constant comparisons with our home country, and developing the necessary missionary ability to learn and allow ourselves to be formed by the local culture;
- c.** enthusiasm for information, analysis and knowledge of the local situation because no aspect of human reality is alien to us in our proclamation of the Gospel;
- d.** apostolic activities in the service of the local Church that are compatible with our charism of service to the non-Christians, to be lived in "a proper balance between spiritual and community life, academic formation, and insertion in the local culture and pastoral activity" (XIV GC 60);

- e. structures that are suitable for the goals of formation and the situation of the local people;
- f. gestures and signs of solidarity that lead us to reflect on our lifestyle and to look at the world from the perspective of the poor.

3.5 Globality

"The formation of Xaverians, inspired by the Spirit, is a collective task involving the entire Institute, the family, the parish, the school, the social milieu and, especially, the students in formation and their formators. It is the particular responsibility of the formation personnel to unite, harmonize and make provision for these elements so that our formation may achieve its goals" (C 57).

104. Formation must bear in mind all aspects of life. The human, social, intellectual, cultural Christian, religious and Xaverian dimensions must be integrated and support each other in the construction of the most complete and balanced human personality possible, in harmony with the Congregation's vocation and the action of the Holy Spirit.

105. During their formation journey, candidates will have to face many different situations. The formator must help them to learn from life and from their various experiences in the family, parish, school and society.

106. Formation takes place within the formation community in the respect of each member's role. As well as the formators and other members of the community, the candidates themselves are full-fledged interacting agents of their formation. Formators should avoid any individualistic approach to formation, as well as any form of excessive protectionism and authoritarianism.

107. Formation is essentially a proposal of life and initiation to the life of the Congregation. Formation is, therefore, the task of the entire Institute, every Circumscription and every one of its members. Even when individual confreres are directly appointed to this work, they must carry it out in the name of, and in harmony with, the ideals and the life of the Congregation. It is therefore vitally important that the values and habits that the formators, often with difficulty, propose to candidates, are not contradicted by the counter-witness of individual confreres and the Congregation.

Chapter Four

AGENTS AND INSTRUMENTS OF FORMATION

“At the heart of the Church, and in communion with the Virgin Mary, community life enjoys a privileged role in formation at every stage. Formation depends to a great extent on the quality of this community. This quality is the result of its general climate and the style of life of its members, in conformity with the particular character and spirit of the institute” (PI 26).

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4.1 Agents

The Holy Trinity

108. It is God himself who, in the Son and in the Spirit, calls and consecrates for the mission. Throughout the life journey of those who are consecrated to him, God always maintains the initiative because “He who has called you is faithful” (1Th 5:23-24; cf. 2Th 3:3; Pl 19). The Father is “the ultimate origin of the consecrated [and missionary] life” (VC 22).

109. Jesus is not satisfied with just calling his disciples, but he patiently forms them during the public ministry and, after his resurrection, he continues through the Spirit “to lead them to the complete truth” (Jn 16:13; cf. C 58; RFX 41-53; Pl 19).

110. The Holy Spirit, “the Inner Teacher”, acts deep within the heart and reveals himself in the fruits of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22).

111. The Spirit of fidelity, teaches, exhorts and guides the consecrated to produce abundant fruits of love and he helps them to embrace the way of the beatitudes.

112. The Holy Spirit consecrates and anoints us, making us aware of the “longing and attraction of divine beauty” (VC 20). The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness that we might live as sons (cf. Rm 8:15-26; Pl 19).

113. The Spirit is also at work in the dynamics of human psychology in its evolutionary, relational, social, religious and cultural dimensions, as the place where God reveals himself to us. To embrace the formation action of the Spirit implies acceptance of the human mediations that he uses (cf. PDV 69; FT 9).

114. “The work of the Spirit has always been associated with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and Mother of all the members of the people of

God" (PI 20). "We must confide in her because her heart is the one most similar to the heart of Jesus" (Guido M. Conforti, *Homily*, 15 August 1931) of which we must be "a faithful copy" (FR 14). Mary, as the first disciple and model of fidelity to God's plan, is an indispensable presence in every vocational journey.

The candidates

115. Candidates are the principal collaborators of the Trinity in the fulfillment of God's plan and are responsible, first and foremost, for the discernment of their vocation with the help of the formators.

116. Dialogue with the Spirit takes place in the sanctuary of the individual's conscience, in view of an attentive, new and responsible response, so that the initial "yes" is confirmed and deepened every day in a serious and attentive listening to God, a greater personal awareness of the values of the consecrated life and the personal responsibilities inherent in the Xaverian charism (cf. C 54; 56; PI 29; PDV 69).

117. Availability to God is made concrete in vocational *docibilitas*, by which candidates respond willingly and receptively to the stimuli given to them by those that the Lord has appointed as guides on their journey, by working on their own abilities and limits, and by embracing in a responsible manner the consequences of their decision to become disciples of Jesus.

The Congregation

118. Formation is the responsibility of the entire Congregation and the result of the collaboration of our whole Family, its way of living the charism, its missionary drive, its lifestyle and its holiness.

119. It is the task of the General Direction to promote an ongoing reflection on formation inspired by the charism, "presenting clearly and in all its stages the course to be followed in order to assimilate fully the spirituality of the Institute" (VC 68).

120. The careful selection and preparation of formators is vitally important, especially the Rectors of the international theologies and the novice Masters (cf. GR 79.2); this should be done in accordance with a program drawn up in agreement between the General Direction and the Regional Directions (cf. GR 57.2).

121. As far as possible, the General Direction and the Regional Directions should have direct contact with the candidates during the canonical visits to dialogue with the individuals and the community.

122. Constant dialogue between the Rector and the Regional and General Directions is of great help at the times of renewing vows, admission to final profession, ordained ministries and assignment to a Xaverian Circumscription. Thus, the Regional Superior and the Superior General with their respective Councils, can admit the candidates in the certainty that their suitability has been proved by positive arguments (CIC 1052 §1; 1025§1-2; 1029).

4.2 Mediations in the Xaverian formation process

Personal life and history

123. Our life, our personal history and all that happens around us is salvation history. At the school of the Word and the life of Christ, “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted” (GS 1) must challenge the disciple and teach him to interpret reality and the various, sometimes difficult and even dramatic, events of life from the perspective of Grace and to recognize the presence of God in his life and in the life of others.

124. The two disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-35) are a powerful biblical icon for this process. Jesus approaches the two disciples on their journey and helps them to interpret the event of his death in the light

of Scripture, and the fulfillment of God's plan as it unfolds in events and in history.

125. Interpreting our life and vocation to the consecrated life is not just a psychological-existential analysis that helps us to seek causes and heal wounds; rather, it is a spiritual task because it leads us to recognize the resplendent and mysterious presence of God in our life-vocation and to commit ourselves to it.

The Church

126. Every vocation to the consecrated life is based upon an experience of the Church in whose faith we are generated to new life. Normally, a vocation is born and develops in the family, the parish community, through contact with the parish priest, other priests and religious or, sometimes, within movements and associations. When the Xaverian leaves these formation settings to follow the path to his definitive consecration, he should maintain these bonds through prayer and mutual interest.

127. The consecrated life is at the service of the Kingdom of Christ (cf. C 7-8; VC 105) in the Church and for the Church (cf. PC 1-2; VC, chapter III). The Church is mediator and guarantor of the gift given through the Founders. "Consecrated persons are called to follow the obedient Christ within an "evangelical project" or a charismatic project that is inspired by the Spirit and authenticated by the Church" (FT 9).

128. Consequently, both initial and ongoing formation must be carried out "necessarily in communion with the Church" (PI 23), searching for God's will through "the human mediation but still authoritative, imperfect but at the same time binding" (FT 9) of the Church.

129. Filial obedience to the Pastors and to the successor of Peter, “a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion” (LG 18; cf. PI 23), the direct superiors and the rule is, therefore, an indispensable element for developing a way of thinking not only “with” the Church, but also “within” the Church (cf. PI 24).

130. The Xaverian formation project should seek the collaboration of the lay faithful, both men and women, choosing them carefully, “within the framework of Church laws and according to their particular charisms and proven competence” (PDV 66).

Our Founder, St. Guido Maria Conforti

131. “The life and the words of the Founder are a singular source of inspiration for our apostolic life” (C 1). This article of the Constitutions enlightens our initial and ongoing formation, especially now that the Church has declared Conforti a saint.

132. The Founder’s charism is codified in the Constitutions and in the General Chapters. Formation must make the Congregation’s foundational and formation documents known, together with the Confortian-Xaverian patrimony, in order to promote a habitual participation in Xaverian life and the observance of its norms because “holiness and mission pass through the community” (FT 19), and because the Spirit speaks to, and guides, the Family gathered together as brothers.

The formation community

133. The formation community, made up of all its members, possesses an irreplaceable formation value because “religious community is, for everyone, the place and the natural setting of the process of growth, where all become co-responsible for the growth of others” (VFC 43). A community “is formative to the extent that it permits each one of its members to grow in fidelity to the Lord according to the charism of his or her institute” (PI 27).

134. Founded upon listening to the Word of God, on faith and fraternal love (cf. Ph 2:1-4; Eph 2:18-22; 3:17; C 36), the community must reveal, from the moment of initial formation “the essential missionary dimension of our consecration” (VC 67) and of our entire life according to our charism.

135. Friendship, respect and esteem among the members of the community are essential for a harmonious community life. A serene, industrious, enthusiastic and constructive family atmosphere contributes to the development of mature personalities (cf. VFC 35-38; VC 51; PI 27).

136. Our communities are becoming more and more international and intercultural. Inspired by the search for a more profound communication, differences of character, culture, origin and age can be an important incentive to grow in the missionary dimension, and in our witness to the power of the Gospel among ourselves and towards the world around us (cf. VFC 54-58).

137. The Xaverian community must feel part of the universal and local Church, which is an expression of, and stimulus to, its vocation to proclaim the Gospel to all the peoples of the world. It must therefore be open to ecclesial communion, pastoral activity and service to the local Church in harmony with our specific charism.

The formation team

The Rector

138. The main responsibility for formation lies with the Rector, who is the center of unity for the formation team and formation work. His task calls for a rich personality, a profound spirit of faith, a strong sense of belonging to the Xaverian family and, possibly, a significant missionary experience. He works through an assiduous presence, prompt interventions and the coordination of the community and formation programs (cf. GR 57.2-3; PI 31).

139. The Rector must possess a spirit of paternity and spiritual authority (cf. FT 13 ff), as well as the ability to establish relationships, because formation and accompaniment demand a constant interaction between the candidates and God.

140. It is the Rector's task to promote and verify the suitability of the candidates with regard to their spiritual, human and intellectual qualities, especially in reference to the spirit of prayer, a profound assimilation of the doctrine of the faith, the ability for authentic fraternity and a clear orientation to the Xaverian charism (cf. PI 30).

141. The Rector should accompany the candidates through frequent meetings (at least once a month), which enable him to have a deep knowledge of their life and to plan their formation in view of a prudent vocational discernment (cf. PI 30b). It is also the Rector's task to organize community formation meetings in order to complete their academic formation, and prepare them to undertake the various Xaverian and ministerial commitments with full awareness of their importance.

142. The development of an intense, committed and stimulating formation setting depends on the Rector. The open, sincere, understanding and demanding character of the Rector will promote the human and vocational growth of each individual and the community.

143. Discernment should be carried out with patience, but without postponing decisions that are already mature.

The Formators

144. The Rector is assisted by other confreres who make up the formation team with him and work under his guidance. These confreres are chosen for their personal maturity, pedagogical and spiritual preparation, sense of belonging to the Xaverian family, zeal for formation, their ability to collaborate with the Rector and with each other and to shoulder specific responsibilities (cf. OT 5b; PI 32).

145. The formators, first and foremost, must be committed to searching for God (cf. FT 12) and be attentive to the action of the Spirit. The effectiveness of formation is largely dependent on the mature and strong personality of the formators from a human and evangelical perspective (cf. VC 66).

146. Under the guidance of the Rector, and in close communion with him (cf. PI 32), the members of the formation team help to animate the candidates. It is their task to mediate the formation proposal in their concrete situation, to promote the sense of community and the ability to relate to, and serve, others.

147. Other perpetually professed confreres may live in the community without being members of the formation team. Although they have no direct responsibility for formation, they too must be well aware of the impact of their life witness and choices on formation. The serene witness of elderly and sick confreres can have a special formation value.

The Spiritual Director

148. In addition to the Rector/formator, it is important that there be a Spiritual Director who enables the candidates to live their formation in the greatest possible openness and freedom. He must be capable of helping candidates to acquire knowledge of their inner world so that, in their response to God, they may bear in mind all the essential elements of their personality. The Spiritual Director guides candidates in the verification, deepening and discernment of their vocation and leads them in the discovery of, and the openness to, the action of the Spirit within them.

149. Besides wisdom, prudence and experience, the Spiritual Director must possess humility and inner freedom to allow himself to be led by the Spirit even before he guides others. Some basic qualities of the Spiritual Director are: an authentic human maturity, a theological and scien-

tific preparation that accompanies his personal reflection and spiritual life, an intense life of prayer and a profound relationship with Christ (cf. Pl 19; 30).

150. In order to ensure the best possible formation setting, the service of spiritual direction must be provided in all our formation communities.

151. Except for the Novitiate (in which the Novice Master is also Spiritual Director), the Spiritual Director is chosen in dialogue with the Rector who will indicate some names of spiritual directors that he believes to be competent for this sensitive task. Bearing in mind our charismatic identity, the Spiritual Director should be chosen from among the Xaverians or, in any case, from among religious, preferably a member of a missionary congregation.

152. The unity of the formation process, and a serene relationship between the Spiritual Director and the Rector, calls for mutual trust and a prior, solid understanding of formation criteria and policies, in the respect of their different areas of competence.

153. The Spiritual Director is bound to remind candidates of their duty to inform the Rector about their discernment journey. He will also invite candidates to cultivate openness of heart towards the Rector, so that he might be made aware of any personal matters that are relevant to the goals of formation and vocational discernment.

154. The Spiritual Director is bound to observe the secrecy prescribed by the Code of Canon Law. Consequently, he does not intervene directly in the admission of candidates to final profession and holy orders (cf. CIC 240 §2).

Teachers

155. Teachers have an important and decisive influence on the formation and development of the Xaverian student (cf. PDV 67). They must

help the students to acquire a complete and solid human and doctrinal formation, to grow in the understanding of the faith in communion with the Church, and to read the signs of the times in the light of scientific knowledge and the Gospel.

156. The formation team must maintain a constant relationship with the teachers and academic institution attended by the students, with the twofold purpose of verifying the teaching at the different levels of formation and promoting knowledge of the Xaverian reality among the teachers and the school, so that the teaching is adequately inserted into the global Xaverian formation project.

4.3. Instruments of formation

The Personal Life Project

157. The Personal Life Project helps candidates to build a solid human and spiritual life and to live according to the Xaverian charism. It affects all the dimensions of life: spiritual, personal, community, intellectual and pastoral.

158. Each candidate must draw up his life project and personalize it by describing how he intends to live the essential Xaverian values. The Personal Life Project is updated each year on the basis of the previous year's project.

159. There is a close bond between the Personal Life Project and the Community Life Project. Candidates will thus be able to make a more complete assessment of the process and the results at personal and community levels.

160. The Personal Life Project is to be verified in the personal formation dialogue with the Rector.

The personal formation dialogue

161. The formation dialogue is a fundamental instrument of formation (cf. VC 66). It emphasizes the subject (subjective pedagogy) and the goal to be achieved (objective pedagogy) in view of discerning God's will in the life of candidates (cf. PI 30) and, at the same time, it stimulates personal growth and responsibility. It serves to encourage, correct and challenge candidates in their generous response to Christ. It must touch upon all aspects of personal, community and apostolic life on the basis of the Personal Life Project and the Community Life Project (cf. VC 65- 66).

162. The formation dialogue is carried out preferably with the Rector, except when he entrusts one or more students to another formator.

163. The formation dialogue requires openness of heart and mutual trust between candidates and the formator. It is carried out on a regular basis, at least once a month, so that its systematic nature assures its seriousness and its continuity guarantees personal growth. Discretion and reservation are always safeguarded during the formation dialogue, but candidates must be informed that the aspects of the dialogue that are not strictly confidential may be shared with the formation team.

Spiritual Direction

164. Spiritual Direction is an indispensable instrument of initial and ongoing formation. It promotes the deep knowledge of self, the relationship with God, the joy of following Christ, fidelity to consecration through a greater love for God and others and the acceptance of difficulties and the cross (cf. PDV 48). It therefore demands openness of heart and awareness on the part of the candidates.

165. Spiritual Direction is vitally important at the decisive stages of commitment: renewal of the vows, Final Profession, Diaconate and Ordination to the Priesthood (cf. GR 59:1; CIC 630 §1-2; 4-5; 239 §2; 240; 246 §4). Candidates must inform the Rector of the Spiritual Director's judgment

for admission to these stages of the consecrated life.

The habit of Spiritual Direction cultivated during initial formation will motivate candidates to make it a lifelong habit.

The Community Life Project

166. The community dimension is essential for the religious life and for formation to the consecrated life (cf. VC 67; VFC 10–11). Its goal is the communal witness to the Gospel and the mystery of the Church, as well as being an efficacious instrument in the search for God's will (cf. FT 20e).

167. Elaborated and verified in community, the Community Life Project is an appropriate instrument for ensuring that community life is fulfilled in the respect of each person's role, and in sharing the gifts we have received for the edification of all (1Cor 12:7). Developed and verified in the weekly community meetings, this project will be a constant point of reference to promote the community's growth in the respect of all (cf. Col 3:16-17; Jn 13:15-17; C 36; GR 57:1).

168. The Community Life Project (cf. GR 36:1) expresses the joy and sincerity of the community's desire to grow also in the midst of problems, difficulties and the different rhythms of its members' growth (RMX 30). It expresses the desire to strive together for holiness, and it helps us to love each other as Jesus taught us (Jn 13:34).

169. The Community Life Project is elaborated at the beginning of the academic or pastoral year and must bear in mind the values to be pursued, the goals the community wishes to achieve and the most suitable instruments for doing so. It should be reviewed regularly. It must be sent to the Regional Direction by the philosophy and novitiate communities, and to the General Direction and Regional Direction by the theology communities, so that their progress may be followed closely.

Community meetings

170. The community meets regularly (usually once a week), according to the rhythm established by the Community Life Project. These meetings are fundamentally of two kinds: meetings that deal with topics connected with daily life, and meetings that deepen formation topics which are essential to our life and our spirituality.

171. The weekly community meeting is a time of active participation and organization of the community life in its various aspects: prayer, community life, apostolic activity, studies, etc.

172. Community meetings are important formation moments in which we form each other together. The fraternal life “needs these meetings in order to grow” (VFC 31) in interpersonal communication and in mutual knowledge, in corresponsibility, in the sense of belonging (cf. VFC 29) and to guide or verify the community journey in accordance with its needs, and in the wider context of the religious life, the Church and the world in which we are inserted (cf. VFC 33).

173. It is important that all members of the community take part in community meetings. These should be prepared and led in an appropriate manner, making use, if necessary, of communication techniques that are compatible with the religious life. Besides the advantages already described above (no. 171), community meetings can help us to overcome the tendency to communicate on marginal topics, avoid problems and interpersonal conflicts, and continue living in an individualistic and autonomous manner (cf. VFC 32).

174. Community formation meetings should be based on a program that covers all the aspects of our life as apostles and consecrated men and integrates the candidates’ academic formation. Special attention

must be given to the definitive life commitments. All the members of the team may be asked to give their contribution.

The annual report

175. Each year the Rector writes a report on each candidate and shares its important aspects with the formation team. The members of the formation team may also indicate the achievements of each candidate and the progress that remains to be made. Whenever there are different opinions and important elements of dissent in the formation team, the Rector should make this known to the Regional Superior in order to gather further elements for discernment. The report is presented to the candidate, who reads it and signs it. In the case of theology students, the annual report should also be sent to the General Direction.

176. If a member of the formation team does not agree with the Rector's report, especially at the time of admission to Final Profession and the ordained Ministries, he is bound in conscience to inform the major superior.

Study

177. Study is a valuable and indispensable instrument of our personal formation; it broadens our knowledge of self and others, it promotes dialogue with contemporary humanity, the various cultures, religions and languages, and it teaches us to grow in the knowledge of God (cf. GR 70:1).

178. A solid theological, cultural and professional formation is the foundation of a richer human and Christian life and a mature, joyful and convinced faith that enables us to offer a more qualified service to the mission, which, today more than in the past, calls for the wide and profound culture that our Founder desired us to have. We must overcome superficial thinking in order to cultivate a wise heart and the intelligence of Faith that will enable us to communicate God to others (cf. PDV 51).

179. Study is the main task of students in formation. Fidelity and the ability to apply oneself to study is an element of vocational discernment (CIC 1032 §3).

180. Study programs should be adapted to the various formation stages by keeping in mind the principles of Christian formation and, in the case of philosophy and theology studies, the guidelines of the Church and the Congregation and the needs of the mission (cf. CIC 250; 659; PDV 51; C 4; 70; FR 54).

181. Formation houses should provide a reading room, or library, to complement the school library, with books for consultation, general Xaverian documents and magazines that give a specific Xaverian perspective to the studies of the students (cf. FR 58). We should also make use of modern technologies in this field.

182. When the school is not run by Xaverians, a confrere should be part of the teaching body; at the very least, a member of the formation team should closely monitor the academic life of the students.

Apostolic activity

183. “The maturation of a religious at this stage will require an apostolic commitment and a progressive participation in ecclesial and social experiences in keeping with the charism of their institute, and taking into account the aptitudes and aspirations of individuals” (PI 62; cf. PDV 56).

184. In our apostolic activity, our identification with Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the good of the brothers (cf. PDV 58), makes us live our charism and verify our assimilation of the values that we proclaim. In our apostolic activity:

- a. we measure our availability to put the Gospel before our desire for success or personal interests;
- b. we are challenged in our ability to collaborate with others and appreciate their initiative;

- c. we show our ability to take the initiative and finish what we have begun;
- d. we are trained to harmonize the various dimensions of our life.

185. Apostolic activity during the formation period may be different and varied, depending on the opportunities offered by the local situation. It must be:

- a. harmonized with the other dimensions of life: spiritual, community, academic formation, insertion into the local culture (cf. XIV GC 60);
- b. gradual and in harmony with the various stages of the formation journey;
- c. diversified in the choices of activities and experiences;
- d. verified with those in charge of the various pastoral areas, with the Rector and the formation team.

186. “More than pastoral practice itself, it is important that students acquire at this stage of their formation the necessary apostolic spirit and aptitudes” (XIV GC 60). Therefore, apostolic activity must not become so demanding that it distracts candidates from their ordinary personal commitments and community life.

187. In order to ensure that apostolic activities are truly formative, they must be properly prepared, accompanied and verified in close relation to study, so that the apostolate challenges study and increases the desire for a solid and specific pastoral formation (CIC 255).

Work

188. Manual, mental, cultural and spiritual work is a way of praising God, taking part in the work of creation, developing our abilities and providing for the sustenance of the community and the Congregation. We manifest our spirit of service in a concrete manner in manual work, especially in performing the most humble tasks.

189. By submitting to the common law of work, we are in communion with the struggles and difficult life of many people; it makes us more responsible in the use of our resources, it helps us to persevere even in difficult situations and prepares us to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the poor. We thus become capable of responding to the needs of the apostolate and carrying out the tasks related to our charism in a professional and dedicated manner.

Psychological accompaniment

190. Human formation may seek the help of psychologists and the psychological-pedagogical sciences inspired by Christian anthropology. Such interventions are not geared towards vocation discernment, which is the task of the formators, but to the identification and growth of aspects of the personality that enable candidates to embrace the vocation to the religious life fully and freely.

191. A psychological diagnosis/assessment of the personality is carried out at the beginning of the formation journey, in order to help the vocation animators and formators to identify any psychological problems that could prejudice the integral development of the individual, and any signs of immaturity that can be overcome with a suitable psychological assistance.

192. During the formation years, especially from novitiate onwards, a more prolonged therapeutical accompaniment may be an effective help for candidates who manifest problems that were not identified previously, or inconsistencies and unconscious conflicts that limit their freedom and vocational response, as well as for candidates who express the desire to acquire a greater self-knowledge.

193. In both cases, we must always respect the liberty of the individual: "to arrive at a correct evaluation of the candidate's personality, the expert can have recourse to both interviews and tests. These must always

be carried out with the previous, explicit, informed and free consent of the candidate" (Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates to the priesthood*, 29 June 2008).

194. We should choose psychologists who have a solid human and Christian maturity, and who are inspired by an anthropology that is clearly in harmony with the Christian concept of the human person, sexuality, vocation to the priesthood and celibacy, so that the accompaniment bears in mind the mystery of the dialogue between man and God according to the vision of the Church.

195. Confidentiality and professional secrecy must be guaranteed during the entire therapeutic process. Only the candidate may authorize in writing any sharing of the results of the diagnosis or therapeutic process to a member of the formation team (cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates to the priesthood*, 29 June 2008).

Means of communication

196. With the Church, we recognize that the new means of communication, especially the Internet, are important instruments for proclamation and the mission in a society that is globalized, pluralistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious.

197. We must train ourselves to use these instruments competently and for our apostolic goals, bearing in mind that they raise some problems concerning the use of time, the quality of our relationships, apostolic zeal and study. We must learn how to live our mission in these times of digital communication in such a way that we can better serve the proclamation of the Gospel (cf. RMX 45:1).

198. Aware of the potential of the new technologies, but also of the risks during initial and ongoing formation, we must form ourselves to use them in a mature and responsible way. We must train ourselves in discernment, prudence, vigilance and the intelligent use of these instruments, in order to promote evangelization and avoid the danger of isolation, dependence and the new forms of pathology that these instruments can cause (cf. *Message of Pope John Paul II for the 36th World Communications Day*: “Internet: a new forum for proclaiming the Gospel”, Vatican City, 12 May 2002).

Ongoing formation

199. Fidelity to God’s call is a journey that commits us for our entire life. In ongoing formation we consolidate our initial formation and remain open to renewal, conversion and cultural changes.

200. The Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (70–81) illustrates the theological reasons, the different dimensions, the meaning, the people responsible, the stages, the forms and the means that qualify ongoing formation (see nos. 342–367 of this *Ratio*).

Chapter Five

FORMATION STAGES

“The Lord provides for the continuity of our family by giving us new brothers. We welcome them with joy and gratitude and we pledge to share with them, by word and example, the experience of the Spirit we have received from the Founder. The admission and formation of new members is an integral part of our missionary service” (C 52).

In this chapter

- 5.1 VOCATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT: BOYS AND YOUNG MEN
 - Introduction: Missionary-Vocation Animation
 - Characteristics, goals, contents, methodological guidelines
- 5.2 POSTULANCY: DECISION FOR DISCIPLESHIP
 - Characteristics
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- 5.5 SPECIFIC FORMATION PROGRAMS
 - The Xaverian Brother
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- 5.6 ONGOING FORMATION
 - Early adulthood
 - Adulthood: full maturity
 - Old age: progressive withdrawal from active life
 - Structures

5.1 Vocational accompaniment of boys and young men: discernment

N.B. Bearing in mind inevitable differences, the following guidelines are valid for the different forms of vocational accompaniment: seminarians at home, reception into the minor seminary (pre-adolescents); reception into the major seminary (adolescents); reception of young people and young adults.

Introduction: Missionary-Vocation Animation

201. Every life is vocation, and every person is called to discern his own life project in order to fulfill the will of the Father. Through missionary animation and vocation ministry, we intend to offer a service for the growth of the local Church and the vocational discernment of young people. In this animation, the missionary vocation should be fully present, by proposing the possible ways in which the Xaverian charism can be lived: either as a Xaverian priest or as a Xaverian brother.

202. Missionary and vocation animation must be personalized and made concrete so that the baptized become aware of their own personal vocation. Animators are therefore called to “bear witness through their lives to the importance and urgency of our vocation and invite people to dedicate themselves to missionary service in its various forms and, in a special way, to a life-long commitment in the Xaverian family” (C 16; cf. AG 23; 38; EN 80).

203. Before receiving a boy/young man into the formation community, an initial verification should be made as to whether his desire to be a missionary is based upon a good Christian life and the absence of contraindications. Special attention should be given to his past and his family situation.

- NB 1. For the age for admission, see nos. 382-383.
- NB 2. For young candidates from other seminaries (diocesan or religious), see nos. 384-385.
- NB 3. For juridical and prudential contraindications, see nos. 372-385.

Characteristics

204. Initial accompaniment is an indispensable task for an honest vocational search, and for a serious, loyal and serene discernment, in view of applying for admission to Postulancy, at which stage it is important that we have solid reasons for believing that candidates are capable of living our lifestyle and our mission.

205. This accompaniment is provided for boys and young men who, after the vocational proposal, show a certain inclination to the mission and a desire to deepen the Xaverian charism and life project

206. In the Xaverian family, initial vocational accompaniment is carried out by following boys and young men in their families and/or in our formation houses.

Goals

207. In the case of young boys, vocational accompaniment aims to promote a progressive awareness of the quality of their human and Christian life, and an initial openness to the demands of the Xaverian vocation.

208. In the case of young men, in addition to what has already been said about young boys, accompaniment aims to help them to define themselves and their own life project, by proposing the Xaverian vocation in its two modalities of the lay and the ordained ministries.

Contents

NB. In the following guidelines, the principle of graduality should be kept in mind.

209. *Missionary purpose.* With respect to the missionary purpose, the vocational proposal aims:

- a. to form candidates to generosity, service and the spirit of sacrifice, in order to verify whether their personal vision of life is in harmony with the vision of the Gospel;
- b. to form candidates to bear concrete witness to their vocation and the mission among their peers and get involved in specific missionary initiatives;
- c. to enrich the candidates' initial attraction to the missionary life and deepen their knowledge of missionary models and the life of our missions;
- d. to verify the presence of a positive inclination to the Xaverian life.

210. *Christ-centered spirituality.* In order to introduce candidates to a Christ-centered spirituality, special attention must be given to:

- a. cultivating the growth of life in the Spirit, by presenting Jesus as a friend and as a fulfilled person, the One who reveals the meaning of life and history; the Christ who is a life project for a commitment in the world; the Christ who calls us to a total and gratuitous response;
- b. initiating candidates to personal, community, liturgical and spontaneous prayer;
- c. forming candidates to a personal and community examination of their life in the light of God's Word;
- d. forming candidates to the Eucharistic life and to Reconciliation;
- e. helping candidates to experience the presence of Mary as our Mother and Sister, who leads us to Jesus and to his Gospel, to openness to the action of the Spirit and to the mission;
- f. helping candidates acquire the habit of interpreting history and their personal life in the light of faith.

211. Religious consecration. In order to introduce candidates to the demands of religious consecration, the vocational proposal aims:

- a. to form candidates to a sense of wonder by becoming aware of all God's gifts and the fact that they, too, are a gift of God;
- b. to lead candidates to the experience of God's paternity because it is only by experiencing this love that we can give ourselves to others;
- c. to train candidates in generous self-giving and gratuitousness;
- d. to present the beauty of the missionary consecration and the vows;
- e. to help candidates cultivate a moderate lifestyle and verify their own personal needs; to help them cultivate fraternity, the ability to share and a spirit of sacrifice as preparation for their consecration.

212. Family characteristic. In forming the family spirit, the formation proposal aims:

- a. to lead candidates to the discovery and the knowledge of their new family's life and history;
- b. to train candidates in corresponsibility, which is indispensable for the creation of a family atmosphere that forms members to community dialogue and to the positive and realistic acceptance of individuals and the community;
- c. to emphasize the community virtues that are appropriate to this stage: service, sharing one's personal possessions, communicating experiences, fraternity and the ability to live joyful and friendly relationships;
- d. to train candidates in the revision of life and a progressive detachment from their own natural family.

213. The Xaverian's humanity. In promoting the candidates' human growth, formation aims:

- a. to develop the fundamental human qualities for the Xaverian life: a sufficient degree of intelligence, realistic self-perception, a sociable character that can adapt to community life, balance and sound judgment, psychological autonomy, practical ability, psychological-physical health, spirit of sacrifice;

- b.* to form candidates in the expression of their sentiments, reflection on their motivations, control of their emotions and a serene management of their sexuality; to train them in openness and transparency in view of a psychological and affective growth appropriate to their age and the choices they must make;
- c.* to train candidates in the ability to understand and judge serenely ideas, situations, reasons and persons;
- d.* to train candidates in the ability to make decisions, well-ordered industriousness and resourcefulness;
- e.* to form candidates to steadfastness in their commitments (beginning with the most simple and ordinary tasks), verifying their desire to grow, learn and improve. Special attention should be given to their application to study;
- f.* to encourage candidates to develop their intellectual abilities so that they achieve the standard of humanistic and scientific education required in their own country for admission to university;
- g.* to initiate candidates to the study of the great problems of life and the world, and to appreciation for other cultures;
- h.* to cultivate good human relationships: education and good manners, propriety in clothing and speech, order in managing their own possessions and those of the community, sensitivity to community life and the needs of others.

Methodological guidelines

The vocational accompaniment of young boys

214. Vocational accompaniment demands that the Christian community, Xaverian community, the family, the vocation promoter and formators be involved in the reception and the vocational journey of the candidates, in harmony with the proposed values and the formation atmosphere in which they must grow.

215. At junior seminary level, it is very important to present some events, testimonies and models (the Founder, St. Francis Xavier, confreres, other

great missionaries and saints). It is important that the models can be imitated through gestures, actions and choices that express profound convictions.

216. The Xaverian formation values must be assimilated through practice, activities and concrete choices that are adapted to the age of the aspirants.

217. Other formation instruments to which great importance must be given at this level are:

- a. the formation dialogue, which provides a personalized accompaniment to aspirants in view of understanding the vocation to which God is calling them;
- b. an intense, regular and dynamic formation catechesis that is appropriate to the age of the candidates;
- c. family life and a community atmosphere of joy and missionary zeal.

The vocational accompaniment of young men

218. The accompaniment of young men in the formation community must respond to their fundamental needs. This is done through community life and critical comparison, in such a way that they feel they are responsible for their formation, albeit in the respect of roles and persons, in an atmosphere of true communion and great responsibility.

219. In a special way, the formation dialogue must help the young candidates to discover themselves, progressively clarify their option for the Xaverian life project, and grow in the motivations and the demands of the Xaverian vocation as a gift from God, and as the gift of self to God in order to proclaim Jesus Christ and his Gospel to those who do not yet know him. At the same time, the young men are also initiated to spiritual direction.

220. The formation community must motivate the gift of self and create situations and spaces in which it can become truly concrete through specific initiatives of missionary animation, charity, welcome, etc.

It is important to provide an organic and existential catechesis that enriches the religious culture of the young candidates and promotes the growth of their faith experience.

221. The formators must give special attention to the affective and sexual growth of the young candidates, and to any possible inconsistencies, by using the appropriate instruments, and by applying the criteria contained in this *Ratio* and the guidelines of the Church. The positive orientation to the celibate life should be verified from the very beginning.

222. Vocational discernment (cf. Pl 89) must be gradual, but thorough, in view of reaching a realistic vocational choice that is made concrete in the application for admission to Postulancy. It must therefore begin before candidates are received into our community, it must explore their personal, family and social experience and verify the organization of their life and their profound motivations. It must be especially attentive whenever candidates are older than the normal school age.

223. Every Circumscription must commit itself to acquiring knowledge of the modern youth culture and its principal manifestations, as well as the concrete situation of the young people of the nation in which it works. It is also very important that we are familiar with the situation of the local Church, its pastoral projects and, especially, the pastoral catechetical ministry and ministry to young people. Methods and specific contents for the accompaniment of young people will be elaborated on the basis of this knowledge and the specific Xaverian identity.

5.2 Postulancy: decision for discipleship

Characteristics

224. Postulancy is the specific and decisive period, lived in community, that is required for an appropriate preparation to Novitiate. Postulancy may have a different location, duration and modality.

225. Postulants grow in human maturity (formation of the personality), in their vocational (human, Christian and apostolic) motivations and decide to adhere to the Xaverian project. They establish a new relationship with their own family, their home Christian community and cultural context in harmony with their missionary vocation.

Goal

226. “The purpose of Postulancy is to gradually prepare candidates for Novitiate, by helping them to grow towards an initial choice of the Xaverian life project” (C 62). It is a process of conversion that leads candidates to put aside their old self and put on the new self with its values and qualities (cf. Eph 4:22-24), and to decide in harmony with the vocation they have received.

227. During this period it should be verified whether or not candidates have the ability to progressively undertake the obligations of missionary consecration (cf. PI 42).

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228. Missionary purpose

Formation will allow the candidates to know the Xaverian charism better; it also will allow the formators to assess whether or not the candidates are called to embrace it as their specific vocation.

229. Christ-centered spirituality

Through an experience of habitual and personal encounter with Christ, postulants are initiated to the interpretation of their life and events in the light of faith; they also become more familiar with the model of missionary life. Consequently, they are led to reject other models of life (narcissism, consumerism, individualism, hyper-efficiency, hedonism, etc.).

230. Religious consecration

Through constant reference to the Founder and the Xaverian charism, postulants are called to integrate their affectivity in a new form of fecun-

dity (chastity); they are helped to detach themselves from possessions and share them (poverty) and to relativize their personal projects in view of abandoning themselves to God through various human mediations (obedience).

231. Family characteristic

Through sincere and cordial relationships, and a better knowledge of the Institute, postulants develop a living sense of belonging to the Xaverian family, which is visible in the ability to engage in active and self-giving participation in the community, and in looking upon the life of the house, and the affairs of the Congregation, as their own.

232. Postulants are helped to grow in the ability to relate to others and acquire a “balanced temperament that can easily relate to others” (FR 52).

233. The Xaverian’s humanity

Formation proposes topics and verifications connected with self-knowledge and psychological-affective maturity. It must emphasize human virtues, such as self-giving, gratuitousness, fidelity to daily responsibilities, love for work, the ability to face the problems of daily life, a balanced affective life, acceptance of others, both men and women, in the respect of their differences, openness of mind and heart to the cultural values and the great problems that affect humanity.

Methodological guidelines

234. Formation setting

Supported by the formation team, postulants grow in their vocational choice in an atmosphere of Xaverianity, trust and responsibility.

235. Instruments. The main instruments are:

- a. regular formation dialogue and spiritual direction at least once a month;

- b.* formative catechesis, with reference to the biblical topic of vocation and the biblical texts dear to Conforti (cf. AA.VV., *Missione potenza del Vangelo*, EMI, Bologna 1994) in order to promote knowledge of the demands of our vocation and to accompany the postulants in their vocational orientation;
- c.* knowledge of the history and life of the missions (through testimonies, correspondence, etc.) to keep interest for the missionary vocation alive;
- d.* the personal life project;
- e.* a psychological assessment, if this has not been done previously (cf. RC 11).

236. Postulancy concludes with admission to the Novitiate, which requires:

- a.* a free and personal application by the candidate;
- b.* a written assessment by the Superior, assisted by the formation team;
- c.* the admission of the candidate by the Circumscription Superior (cf. GR 63.1).

5.3 Novitiate: initiation to discipleship

Characteristics

237. Novitiate, carried out in compliance with Canon Law, allows the novices to experience the lifestyle of the Institute, and to form themselves in mind and heart according to its spirit (cf. CIC 646; C 63) in view of becoming members.

Goal

238. In continuity with the previous vocation journey, and in view of the subsequent stage, the novices are called to deepen their vocation in relation to the Xaverian charism. On their part, the formators must verify their intention and suitability for first profession (cf. PI 45).

239. Novices should be helped to personally verify the charismatic experience in which they are involved, and to internalize the values they have seen in the inspiring models. During the period of the Novitiate, candidates deepen the charism of the Institute, they begin to make it their own and lay the solid foundations for a lasting and joyful decision in a different cultural context.

240. Novitiate is also the privileged time for a definitive choice of consecration to the mission as a Xaverian priest or as a Xaverian brother.

241. Novitiate is also the time in which candidates must prepare themselves for the subsequent cultural and psychological leap to the international theologies. Consequently, Novitiate must train them in detachment from their own cultural milieu, to be ready to continue their formation in a context different from their own, to be sensitive to the demands of an intercultural community, to enthusiasm for studying philosophy and theology in a foreign language. Novitiate should also help novices to accept serenely whatever destination they are given.

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242. Missionary purpose

The encounter with Christ transforms the life of the novices and awakens in them the joy of sharing their experience by responding to every person's right to receive the proclamation of the Gospel (cf. RMX 87; 87:1). The values of the mission are explained in all their demands: the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians, solidarity and love for justice and peace, the ecclesial nature of the missionary vocation, etc. The life and the spiritual journey of St. Francis Xavier and St. Guido M. Conforti are models and inspiring points of reference.

243. Christ-centered spirituality

On the basis of the Founder's experience of Christ, the novices are led to deepen their own personal experience of Christ, the One sent by the

Father, and to love him by embracing his sentiments (cf. Ph 2:5) and to make him the foundation of their own life. Formation to prayer and “the reading and meditation of Sacred Scripture” (PI 46) will help them to look upon their life with hope and joy in the fulfillment of God’s will and to conform their thoughts and desires to it (cf. Ph 4:8).

244. Religious consecration

Bishop Conforti lived and proposed to us the profound union between consecration and mission. (cf. TL 2; C 18; FR 26; RMX 16; 189) The novices are therefore called to deepen the apostolic dimension of the vows.

The common vocation to holiness is made concrete for the Xaverian in his specific vocation. Therefore, the deepening and the practice of the vows (mission, poverty, chastity and obedience) leads the novices to a joyful perception of them as a proposal of life completely fulfilled in the Spirit.

245. Vow of mission as total orientation and sole personal life project, to which all personal energies and plans are directed; the vow that joins and seals the religious profession to the apostolic life, in a life commitment “that could not be greater or more noble” because it makes us more like Christ and the Apostles (cf. TL 1-2; FR 6-9; 26; C 17-19).

246. Vow of chastity as “letting oneself be loved” totally by God (1Cor 13:1ff), in order to serve others with a free and undivided heart (cf. 1Cor 7:32ff; LG 42).

- a. “Embraced for the Kingdom of God, celibacy, together with the chastity that is proper to this state, is a gift, a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit and an expression of the love with which Christ loved the world and gave himself for its salvation” (C 20).
- b. Chastity, as an experience of joy and freedom, becomes the automatic choice of love that implies the ability to engage in transparent and serene relationships with everyone (cf. VC 88) and it promotes fraternal communion (cf. PC 12; PI 13; VFC 44; FR 28-31; 46; C 20-24; TL

5). It liberates the heart from any form of dependence and possession and it must be protected by vigilance, making use of human and spiritual means, and through a responsible use of the means of social communication.

- c. Chastity affects the depths of the heart and the structure of the person. No one can consider himself immune from difficulties or danger. This is true especially today, since currents of thought look upon chastity as outmoded and do nothing to protect it.

247. Vow of poverty as the first choice of discipleship and as the path towards a more authentic evangelization (cf. Mk 6:7ff), as a witness to solidarity and the transcendence of the Kingdom, and its judgment on our inhuman world (cf. C 27).

Bearing in mind that the goal of poverty is “to center one’s life on the poor Jesus, who is contemplated, loved, and followed” (PI 14), it must be expressed through:

- a. the sharing of goods;
- b. dependence in the use of goods (cf. GR 28.2);
- c. austerity of life, simple needs and modest resources (cf. C 26);
- d. the ability to accept even deprivation joyfully;
- e. submission to the common law of work;
- f. corresponsibility in the search for means of sustenance and instruments for the apostolate;
- g. a personal and community commitment of solidarity with people in need (cf. PC 13; TL 4; C 28; GR 28.1-4).

248. Vow of obedience as a way to the progressive conquering of true freedom (VC 91), as a profound ability to listen to the mystery of life (FT 4ff); as a supreme sign of availability and self-giving for the Kingdom, and as an experience of personal growth in the liberating search for the Father’s will.

- a. Obedience is also faith-trust, sometimes crucifying, which must be borne in mind when deciding to join the Institute.

- b. Obedience implies the ability to collaborate in a corresponsable manner in the discernment of God's will, to accept decisions by rediscovering the service of the Superior within the community (cf. C 32; RMX 38) and to give up one's own projects in order to adhere wholeheartedly, and strive with all one's strength, to fulfill the evangelical projects of the community and the Church.
- c. Obedience liberates us from the search for apostolic success since God's plan can also be accomplished through failure (cf. PC 12; TL 6; FR 6-7; 11; 41-44; 68; C 31-34).

249. Family characteristic

The community is the theological place in which the confreres live their fraternal relationships based upon the Gospel.

Formation prepares the novices for rebirth in a new family, it strengthens their sense of belonging and the acceptance of their limits, and helps them build interpersonal relationships that are fraternally evangelical, authentic, profound and gratuitous (cf. RMX 31).

250. The Xaverian's humanity

- a. The Novitiate should emphasize the formation of the heart (cf. Ps 33:15), training the novices in introspection and to interpret their life history in the light of God's will. They should also be helped to reflect on how they manage their affections, the inevitable moments of solitude, their personal motivations and aspirations, and desire to grow and improve themselves (*docibilitas*).
- b. The Novice Master should help the novices to cultivate "a joyful outlook on life, natural ease in their behavior, courtesy, loyalty, strength of character, shunning deceit and insincerity, and ever ready to accept new challenges and face any risks for the glory of God and the good of souls" (cf. FR 69).
- c. It is important that novices become familiar with the humanity and holiness of Conforti, as a man with a balanced personality, profoundly centered on the missionary ideal, tenacious, gentle and demanding.

- d.* It is also important that the novices gain a deep knowledge of Francis Xavier, a man of great desires and zeal in spite of the difficulties he faced; he stood free and courageous before the powerful; he was capable of profound relationships and attentive to persons, to direct contact and to friendship; he was open to different cultural contexts and was willing to learn from experience and to develop his own judgments. “He belonged entirely to God in working for his glory, he belonged entirely to others in working for their salvation and he belonged entirely to himself in striving for his own sanctification” (*Parola del Padre*, 45).

Methodological guidelines

251. The formation setting

- a.* The specific nature of the Novitiate, in which the novices find “an atmosphere that is favorable to becoming deeply rooted in a life with Christ” (PI 50) must be safeguarded (house, timetable, lifestyle, harmony between times of prayer and times of activity), whilst preserving the necessary openness to the Church, the world and the Congregation.
- b.* The Novice Master is the spiritual director of all the novices; he listens to the Spirit in order to lead them to “full maturity in the Lord” (Ph 1:11), he confirms the existence of their vocation, he verifies with them the authenticity of their response (the right intention and suitability, cf. CIC 646) and presents them to the Regional Superior and his Council for admission to profession. Other formators may work with the Novice Master in close collaboration, but with great discretion (cf. CIC 650-652 §1).
- c.* A constructive interaction within the group of novices must be promoted. Contacts with Xaverians in the mission, testimonies, inter-congregational meetings and pastoral experiences will help the novices to prepare for their departure for a different cultural milieu (cf. RMX 87:1).

252. Instruments. The main instruments of Novitiate are:

- a. personal prayer and the meditated study of Sacred Scripture (*lectio divina*);
- b. regular dialogue with the Novice Master;
- c. personal and community life projects;
- d. constant reference to the fundamental documents of our Institute (especially the Testament Letter and the Constitutions);
- e. contact with the great authors of the Church's spiritual tradition (cf. Pl 47);
- f. study of a Xaverian official language: Italian or English;
- g. manual work as an expression of creativity and fidelity in daily life;
- h. contacts with other novitiates;
- i. experiences that help to know the local Church; situations of poverty, marginalization and the human groups in the greatest need of evangelization. Any apostolic commitment must not take on such an importance that it disturbs the rhythm of the Novitiate.

253. The documents of the Founder should be properly gathered and kept in a place that makes them easy to consult; they should be progressively translated into the local language.

First profession

254. Novitiate ends with the religious profession by which the individual makes himself available to God, who calls and consecrates him for the mission in the Xaverian family and in the Church, through the vows of mission-poverty-chastity-obedience. The first profession is celebrated in simplicity (cf. OPR 5; for the profession formula, cf. C 67), bearing in mind the social context in which the Novitiate is located, or the place where the celebration takes place.

5.4 Period of temporary vows: discipleship

Characteristics

255. During this period, the temporary professed confreres, as members of a Xaverian community, are accompanied in their ongoing vocational discernment and in the deeper experience of the concrete demands of missionary consecration. They are initiated into corresponsibility and sharing, in preparation to their definitive decision at final profession and, where applicable, the reception of the ecclesial ministries.

256. This is the time in which the human and spiritual maturity of the young confreres is verified also through a progressive insertion into a multicultural community.

257. The period of temporary vows is also the time for the development and concretization of the vocational option, the verification of the choices made and deepening the values of consecration to the mission, through prayer, community service, the apostolate and the study of philosophy and/or theology.

258. The years of temporary profession must lead the young confreres to take on the religious-missionary life proposal lucidly and freely, according to the form typical of our Institute, by practicing it as their own life project (cf. C 65).

259. During this stage, the aspects that require a special formative attention in view of the development of the attitudes necessary to the missionary life (cf. RMX 87:1) are:

- a. faith lived as discipleship;
- b. human formation;
- c. community dynamics within a multicultural group;
- d. initiation to apostolic activity;
- e. theological formation as a deepening of the mystery of God.

Goals

260. To unify our activities around the urgency of proclaiming God's passionate love for humanity, incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, the Missionary of the Father, according to the witness of the Founder.

261. To offer the conditions for living a profound and demanding spiritual life, which must be always verified and purified, in full harmony with the Xaverian charism, so that the professed confreres adhere entirely to the project of missionary consecration in the service of the Kingdom.

262. To help confreres to develop a free and responsible personality, capable of fraternal, healthy, and constructive relationships with all (LG 8; PDV 43).

263. To create a community and fraternal atmosphere that strengthens the sense of belonging to the Community and, more in general, to the Congregation, as a witness to the universality of Christ's message (C 37; GR 37:1).

264. Initiation to the apostolic ministry (cf. PI 62), by strengthening the young confreres' zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel *ad gentes* in an atmosphere of shared responsibility, overcoming the fear of measuring themselves against the complexity of the society in which they are living, and the temptation to withdraw into the more familiar setting of the intra-ecclesial world.

265. To promote the necessary philosophical-theological and cultural competence (cf. PI 61), which will introduce them to the Christian mystery, form them to globality and develop a universal vision of reality in the awareness of its complexities and dynamics. The young confreres must learn to interpret history theologically, to dialogue with contemporary cultures and religions, to discern the signs of the times, to integrate theological knowledge and theological experience and to creatively produce inculturated ways of communicating the Gospel.

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Missionary goal

266. To cultivate the missionary identity of the heart, which is made manifest in full availability to give oneself completely for the Gospel (1Cor 15:10) in an attitude of audacious humility (XV GC 14; 45; 57), by giving priority to encounter and relationship with those who do not believe, who profess another religion and belong to another culture, and with the poor, living the mission in a spirit of reciprocity and sharing, with the desire to receive and not only to give, to learn and not only to teach.

267. To learn to interpret events by not giving absolute value to our own ideas, but bearing in mind the point of view of others and their culture, showing respect when we speak about other peoples and cultures, freeing ourselves from the ethnocentric mentality that judges everything with the criteria of our own culture, which is sometimes contaminated by unconscious prejudice.

268. To deepen our own specific call to the mission starting from the Gospel, the life of the Church and the challenges of concrete situations.

269. To discover the mission as the work of God and the action of the Church (Lk 10:1; RMi 11; XV GC 49; EN 60; 75-76; FR 11-13; 18-20); to live it as the total gift of self to others in the strength of the Spirit of Christ, so that his love might reach and free people in their concrete context; to express it in apostolic zeal as well as in the courageous acceptance of the cross, suffering and failure.

270. To live the commitments of the apostolate with a specifically missionary style, and to involve the young confreres gradually in the missionary animation of the local Church.

271. Bearing in mind the constant renewal of the mission (XV GC 61), to deepen missionary topics from a theological and social-cultural-re-

ligious perspective; to acquire a serious knowledge of non-Christian religions at historical, sociological and theological levels; to form to the practice of ecumenical, interreligious and intercultural dialogue (XV GC 53); to heighten sensitivity to the most serious problems facing humanity and the availability to take on “the most urgent tasks” (AG 27).

272. To nourish a strong, passionate love for the Church, the true protagonist of the mission, and a very keen sense of the urgency of its proclamation and mission, to be nourished through openness of heart towards those who do not know Christ, and through learning what is happening in the life of the young Churches.

273. To grow in sensitivity and concrete commitment to human promotion and justice, making a preferential choice for the poor and the marginalized, as a basic life orientation and missionary pastoral commitment, cultivating the habit of seeing the world from the perspective of the poor (cf. PdP 103-104).

Christ-centered spirituality

274. To live a personal experience of faith in Christ, as the absolute rule that helps us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and makes us capable of seeing events in the light of faith, in harmony with the Christocentrism that is typical of Xaverian spirituality (cf. TL 7).

275. To grow in friendship and habitual union with Christ and, in Him, with the Mystery of the Triune God, which is expressed through:

- a. fidelity to the times and places of personal and community prayer (TL 8);
- b. liturgical formation towards a greater, active and full participation in the liturgy (cf. SC 14);
- c. openness to a friendly encounter with Christ in others and in the poor who knock at our door (Mt 25:31ff).

276. Formation to an assiduous relationship with the Word of God as the source of values and convictions, the place where we interpret reality and events, our program of life and daily action, through study, prayer and the faithful practice of the *Lectio Divina*.

277. To celebrate the Eucharist as the source and culminating moment of our daily personal commitment and community life (cf. GR 46.1).

278. To live the sacrament of Reconciliation as a grateful expression for the gift of God's saving mercy, and as a sign of our desire for conversion and reconciliation with others (C 46–47), and for a genuinely Christian and ecclesial formation of the moral conscience.

279. To know the different forms of prayer and spirituality in the Church and perceive their positive values, without identifying with the movements that represent them.

Religious consecration

280. The period of the temporary vows is the time for:

- a.** deepening the theology of the religious life in the academic courses;
- b.** living the consecrated life as the Xaverian way of our self-giving to Christ for the mission;
- c.** growing in the love of the vows (TL 4–6), considering them as a personal gift that God makes to each one of us: truly “the Lord could not have been more benevolent towards us” (TL 1)

281. Vow of mission.

- a.** Theological deepening of missionary topics and the experience of the mission of the Church and the Xaverian mission.
- b.** A profound interest for the development of the Church in the world and for ecclesial events.
- c.** Growth in apostolic zeal and in learning to use pastoral instruments.
- d.** Acquisition of the missionary attitudes in all areas of life.

282. Chastity

- a. The ability to live apostolic relationships that are not centered on the satisfaction of personal needs, but on the wellbeing of persons.
- b. Deepening of topics connected to chastity in the current world, in order to achieve a serene experience of the same also in the future.
- c. Growth in serene fidelity to the choice we have made.

283. Poverty

- a. To be satisfied with what the community can give (cf. 1Tim 6:8; TL 4), to be grateful for it and experience even some deprivation with joy.
- b. To prepare an accurate account of personal expenses and present it to the rector of the community.
- c. Initiation to making a personal contribution to the life of the community.
- d. Knowledge of the economic problems of the community and consequent reflection on lifestyle.
- e. Interest in the problems of the world, study of the causes of poverty and application of what we learn to our life.
- f. To learn to make a financial report and manage a pastoral or a social activity in a correct and transparent manner.

284. Obedience

- a. Increasing acceptance of responsibility in the community, in the drafting and fulfillment of the Community Life Project, in the respect of the community roles.
- b. To feel responsible for each brother and his vocational development.
- c. Involvement in the journey of the Congregation, understood as a personal adhesion to the Xaverian project, through the resources we have at our disposal and making our own serene contribution to reflection during Chapters and other events linked to the life of the Congregation.

Family characteristic

285. A keen sense of belonging, in an affective and effective adhesion to the Congregation, with the desire to share its life totally, and to give our contribution to its service to the mission (cf. FR 45; TL 10; C 35). Apostolic detachment from our natural family.

286. Profound knowledge of the Founder, the charism and the history-reality of the Institute through Xaverian literature and instruments of information.

287. Correspondence and interest in the formation communities of other Circumscriptions; welcome and cordial listening to the confreres who return from the mission.

288. To live internationality as a process of authentic communion, true fraternity and adhesion to the project that inspires us and gives meaning to our life as consecrated men (cf. XV GC 22; XVI GC 95); sensitivity to the values of different cultures; the ability to establish our fraternity at a more profound level than that of common customs or cultural affinity, convinced that the community is first and foremost a gift from Above and must be built through an active and self-giving participation (cf. VFC 8-10; GR 37; TL 9; FR 45; 48; RMX 30-31).

289. Apostolic organization of the community, overcoming any mere psychological and sociological notion, in order to live out its mystery of faith and to commit ourselves to fulfilling its image as a Church sent to bear a credible witness to the new communion in Christ (cf. C 37). To learn to live the relationship between apostolate and community in a balanced way "bearing in mind that the community is the depository of the mission, and the guarantor of its verification, continuity and realization. (. . .) Community discernment (at local, Regional and ecclesial levels) and frequent communication are the means we have at our disposal in order to ensure that our diversities become a source of enrichment for the mission" (RMX 39).

290. “In order to become brothers and sisters, it is necessary to know one another. To do this, it is rather important to communicate more extensively and more deeply” (VFC 29). It is therefore fundamental that we form candidates to a more mature communication of self, their experiences of faith and the apostolate (cf. VFC 32).

291. Formation to work as a contribution to the Family, corresponsibility towards the brothers and fidelity to our commitments.

292. Candidates should be helped to experience the moment of admission to the different formation stages as moments of awareness, as steps towards total belonging to the Xaverian family and the assumption of their ministerial identity.

The Xaverian’s humanity

293. The humanity of Jesus is the instrument through which salvation has been given to us (cf. PDV 43). Each one of us must therefore nourish a profound interest in his own human growth, in the awareness that human formation is both personal effort and a grace that we must desire, ask for and welcome.

294. Important human elements for the mission are: balance, firmness of will, consistency, tenderness, spirit of sacrifice; moderation, correctness and pride in things well done; incarnation and solidarity with the people; a great respect for every person combined with a consistent fidelity to our identity; industriousness and a sense of responsibility in the use of time and freedom; sensitivity, patience, love and courage in our commitment to justice and truth (PDV 43-49; cf. RMX 24).

295. Sincerity, discretion, a mature way of presenting ourselves and expressing our sentiments with prudence, are the keys to fostering trust and listening and they also reveal our maturity and affective richness.

296. A healthy industriousness and resourcefulness in study and practical activities that can be useful in the community or in the mission (cf. FR 57-60).

Methodological Guidelines

297. The following are necessary for an authentic and effective formative journey:

- a.** a greater self-knowledge, extended to all the components of the personality, verified in dialogue with the formators and by the multi-cultural fraternal community life;
- b.** a free, constructive and responsible self-management, as a response to vocation in daily life, resulting in a true *sequela Christi*;
- c.** a lifestyle characterized by the gift of self for love, in service, in relationships and in daily commitment, lived within good and constructive relationships that are geared towards growth in the Xaverian vocation;
- d.** an attitude of availability to learn constantly from life, from others and from the formators, avoiding any temptation to resistance.

298. The personalization of the formative program demands its differentiated articulation, which bears in mind the degree of maturity reached by the individuals, including, if necessary, opportunities for periods of personalized formative accompaniment, with the purpose of verifying and strengthening the aspects in which the student must grow.

299. The witness of holiness given by Bishop Conforti, and the clear conviction of the Church that “the true missionary is the saint” (RMi 90), demand that the community be an authentic school of holiness in which each individual, in docility to the Spirit and in the imitation of the Lord, is stimulated to live in fullness the vocation he has received.

300. We must avoid ideas and attitudes that tend to reduce the community to a mere functional tool for the acquisition of philosophical-theological and pastoral competence, or a place of coexistence and study. The community is, first and foremost, a true and proper experi-

ence of Xaverian fraternity, a unique community of disciples called to embody the mystery of the Crucified and Risen Lord, the missionary of the Father, and to live a special habitual union of life with him and the others who are called, in order to verify and stimulate the growth of the specific characteristics of apostolic discipleship.

301. The formative proposal of the community must guarantee, on the one hand, a sense of belonging to the family, which preserves its real consistency; on the other hand, it must guarantee apostolic openness, which harmonizes it with the life and the development of the Church and society.

302. The community must have an organic, unified and up to date project, capable of harmonizing the clear proposal of the goal, the serious nature of the journey and attention to the concrete individuals of the community.

303. It is important to form the desire for autonomy and the critical outlook that is typical of young people, by encouraging them to consult the sources of information, to become personally aware of reality and to shoulder their own responsibilities.

304. The formation team must bear in mind, and strive to achieve a constant balance, between the following two dynamics:

- a. integration between the personal and community dimensions of formation;
- b. interconnection between self-formation and the formation dialogue.

305. The formator at this stage is, above all, one who accompanies and proposes values without imposing them. This is the age for a demanding comparison between the values and their specific mediation in daily life, both at personal and community levels, and it must become practice in real life.

306. The Word of God, assiduously read and prayed, the Magisterium of the Church and the founding documents of the Congregation, allow the young confreres to discover, purify and authenticate their motivations and give unity to their life.

307. Study and school must be taken seriously, in the awareness of their importance for achieving a missionary understanding of what is taught, and for forming missionaries with a mature faith who are capable of giving an answer to those who ask the reason for their faith (cf. 1Pt 3:15), and with the ability to examine themselves in dialogue with a complex society.

308. “More than pastoral practice itself, it is important that students acquire at this stage of their formation the necessary apostolic spirit and aptitudes” (XIV GC 60).

309. The normal instruments of formation accompaniment are: the community life project, the personal life project, regular formation dialogue, spiritual direction, community formation meetings and, where necessary, psychological consultation.

310. The temporary nature of the vow, in the mind of the Church, provides for the necessity of a further discernment open to the possibility that the candidate decides to leave the Institute, or that the formators advise him to embrace another state in life or, if necessary, dismiss him from the Institute (cf. GR. 68.1-3; CIC 688; 696).

- a. In all cases, the decision should be, as far as possible, the result of a serene, profound and shared discernment, with the desire to understand the call and the will of God.
- b. When the decision is mature, it should be implemented without further delay.
- c. The formator should draw up a report on the departure and its motivations, and send it to the General Direction, in view also of any possible future developments.

d. If the candidate leaves the Institute before the expiry of the vows, he is invited to ask the Superior General for a dispensation. Should he refuse to do so, the General Direction, upon the report of the formators and the Circumscription Superior, may decide to dismiss him.

311. If, at the moment of his departure, a student is not in his native country, he is invited to return home. He cannot demand anything from the Institute for the years he spent in it. Any necessary help will be decided by the Regional Superior of the native Circumscription.

5.5 Specific formation programs

312. "Membership of the Institute is acquired through the profession of the evangelical counsels and the vow of mission" (C 5). The guidelines offered so far for formation also apply to all the members of the Congregation.

The Xaverian Brother

313. "In itself, the state of consecrated life is neither clerical nor lay" (CIC 588).

314. The vocation of the Xaverian Brother is in itself complete and its unifying point lies in our Missionary Consecration. It therefore has its own value for the person and the Church, independently of the sacred ministry (cf. VC 60). It is a precious gift for the Church and the Congregation, a prophetic sign for the world and a necessary ecclesial service for a harmonious and complete development of the mission entrusted to the Congregation.

315. It is difficult to propose a single formation program for all, given the different starting points, the different locations of the Novitiate, the different schools and specializations. The Xaverian Circumscriptions should

provide “an organic course of studies that guarantees a sound theological and pastoral preparation and a technical, scientific or catechetical qualification or specialization” (GR 70.4).

316. Besides what is offered by Postulancy and the Novitiate, and by the life of our formation communities, a basic philosophical-theological and spiritual formation is also necessary. This formation can be guaranteed by a course of religious sciences, by the philosophical-theological curriculum, or by similar courses according to the possibilities of each Circumscription. In the meantime, we should ensure that the Xaverian human and spiritual formation of the Brothers is done together with all the other candidates.

317. Specialization (including, where appropriate, a theological specialization) will depend on the needs of the mission and the Congregation, on personal inclinations and qualities, on whatever studies the candidate has done before joining, as well as on the study opportunities offered by the local context.

318. The venue for specialization studies will be decided by the General Direction in dialogue with the Circumscriptions (as in the case of assignments to the international theologies); normally the venue is one of the theology communities.

Initiation to the minor and ordained Ministries

319. For those who are called to the minor Ministries (Lectorate and Acolyte) and the ordained Ministries (Diaconate and Priesthood), this is the time for acquiring and living the spiritual and pastoral attitudes implicit in the reception and exercise of these same ministries. Furthermore, candidates are also to acquire a profound apostolic spirit, the ability to become animators of ecclesial communities, a solid theological preparation and a good initiation to the pastoral ministry (cf. C 70; Pl 102ff).

320. The wisdom of the Church leads candidates to the assumption of priestly responsibility in stages, through the conferral of the Lectorate and Acolytate and ordination to the Diaconate. These ministries are important and crucial stages in the progressive formation to the Priesthood for the mission. They are the fundamental steps of an initiation through which candidates receive the grace and the mandate for the progressive and authentic exercise of the tasks of the missionary Priesthood.

321. The *Lectorate* is characterized by:

- a. a privileged relationship with the Word of God through the *Lectio Divina*, praying the Word and exegetical study;
- b. the maturation of a prophetic spirituality, in a spirit of radical consecration, discipleship and a consistent and courageous witness;
- c. growth in listening to others, selflessness and attention to persons and situations;
- d. performing the ministry of lector, in community and in the different pastoral settings, learning to proclaim the Word of God clearly.

322. The *Acolytate* is characterized by:

- a. a privileged relationship with the Eucharist through an active and full participation in the eucharistic celebration, adoration, contemplative prayer and theological reflection;
- b. the maturation of a eucharistic spirituality, in the total gift of self, gratuitousness and communion;
- c. performing the ministry of acolyte, in community and in apostolic settings, especially in the service at the altar and of the poor.

323. The *Diaconate* requires:

- a. discernment with the Rector and the Spiritual Director in order to ensure a free, conscious and definitive choice of the Diaconate;
- b. a profound relationship with Christ the Servant, a habit of intense and deep prayer, including fidelity to the Liturgy of the Hours;

- c. the maturation of a spirituality of service, in the assumption of the essential characteristics of the *diaconia* of Christ, especially in the offering of self for love;
- d. commitment to grow in the human virtues of the Deacon, such as benevolence, hospitality, generosity, sharing, sobriety and humility;
- e. a mature and responsible presence in the community, becoming a constructive stimulus in the formational moments and offering the witness of service in daily life;
- f. apostolic compassion for the poor, the least, the sick and the marginalized;
- g. the exercise of the ministry of Deacon in the community and in a pastoral context.

324. The *Priesthood* requires:

- a. discernment with the Rector and the Spiritual Director in view of ordination to the Priesthood, centered on the ability to guide the Christian community, to preside at the Eucharist and administer the sacraments, to exercise pastoral charity (*Munus docendi, regendi et sanctificandi*) and, more in general, on the concrete demands of the Xaverian missionary Priesthood;
- b. a faith lived in intimate union with Jesus, the Missionary of the Father and the Good Shepherd, in total abandonment to the Father and in docility to the Spirit, through the ministry of prayer and the joy of consecration for the Kingdom, in a process of constant conversion;
- c. the consolidation of a priestly missionary spirituality, based on love for, and dedication to, the Church and the world, with its reference point in Jesus, who was compassionate, merciful and generous until the total sacrifice of self for the salvation of humanity;
- d. a continuous and assiduous work on our own humanity, such as to consolidate the virtues that are typical of the missionary pastor: the ability to plan, animate and guide, kindness and tenderness, responsibility and competence, prudence in discernment and discretion, fidelity and firmness, frankness and readiness to collaborate;

- e. a progressive introduction to the ministry through pastoral courses offered by the Theological Institutes, learning apostolic activity and missionary animation, learning to harmonize pastoral programs with those of the local Church and with our charism;
- f. awareness of the ecclesial, juridical and penal implications connected with the specific deontology of the priestly ministry, for example:
 - respect for the dignity of persons;
 - the duty of loyalty, dignity, exemplarity and collaboration;
 - it is forbidden to discredit a confrere in any way in the exercise of the ministry;
 - the priest has a duty to give advice to his Superior, confreres and collaborators;
 - the necessity of ongoing and professional formation;
 - the obligation of professional secrecy and confidentiality (discretion; the ability to keep a secret; to maintain an appropriate distance that enables us to make free judgments, and propriety in our relationships);
 - responsibilities connected with abuse committed by oneself or by others (in the fields of sexuality, alcohol, use of goods, etc.), bearing especially in mind the norms issued by the Holy See concerning these matters.

325. The study of Theology normally ends with the Bachelors Degree in Theology or an equivalent diploma. Any exceptions must be decided by the Rector from the first years of Theology in dialogue with the Regional Direction and General Direction.

International theologies

326. The Congregation has made the choice of the International Theologies as the ordinary place for a first direct experience of intercultural community (cf. XIII GC 56; 61; XIV GC 56ff; XV GC 64ff; XVI GC 173). Even if in some cases a more limited encounter with internationality takes place in previous stages, this is the time at which all the young candidates in formation are normally faced with this experience.

327. At this point of formation, therefore, a young man should be ready to face the cultural leap required by the International Theologies.

328. Should the formators believe that a young man is not ready, they must carry out a serious discernment. If they believe it is a matter of a temporary problem that can be solved, the candidate, in dialogue with the Regional Direction and the General Direction, should be given an experience *in loco* until he is deemed ready for this stage. Should the cause be profound personal difficulties that cannot be solved, the candidate should be advised to choose another path.

The presence *in loco* of an International Theology is not an exemption from this discernment or from assignment to another Theology community.

329. The purpose of the International Theologies, at an age in which the young men are still relatively adaptable, is to promote the acquisition of the attitudes that make it possible to live in an intercultural community, “the growth of a strong sense of belonging, a vital orientation towards the mission, the importance of community life in a multi-cultural setting, the search for a balance between contemplation and action, and the effort to provide an academic mission-oriented formation” (XV GC 64a; XVI GC 174).

330. The Superior General with his Council assigns students to the International Theologies. He will bear in mind:

- a. the candidates’ profiles, previously drawn up by the formators and sent to the General Direction, describing their formation journey and missionary orientation;
- b. the viable composition of the communities and their internationality;
- c. the missionary needs of the Congregation.

331. Each candidate should accept the decision in a spirit of obedience to God’s will.

332. In all the Theologies, a year should normally be set aside to learn to speak and write in the new language. Learning the local language is the first condition of respect for the people that welcome us, the first step towards an efficacious apostolate and the first requirement for a fruitful understanding of the theological studies. Formators should be particularly attentive to the period of introduction of newly arrived students, and provide formational and introductory meetings to the milieu and culture.

333. The International Theology must be aware of the risk of leveling down its lifestyle and adopting a superficial style of communication, in an attempt to make it acceptable to all, by using all the possible dynamics to ensure that diversity becomes richness and a stimulus to community growth.

334. The young students must immerse themselves totally in their new context. Without excluding the opportunity to share aspects of life of the various countries of origin, the community normally adopts the local language, culture, habits, lifestyle and food (XVI GC 100). Theological study should also revolve around local aspects, rather than on topics related to the home country.

335. During their Theology studies, students have the right to one period of vacations in their native country in order to:

- a. enjoy a due and proper rest;
- b. learn to manage time responsibly by remaining faithful to their vocation and the demands of the interior life;
- c. live in contact with their natural family and roots, giving more time and attention to loved ones, and sharing their work, joys and concerns;
- d. prepare the family for the son's definitive belonging to the Xaverian Family, helping it to understand elements that may appear unusual in certain cultural contexts;
- e. visit the nearby Xaverian communities and give their own fraternal witness and collaboration, thereby showing the universal character-

istic of the mission and broadening the horizons of their native ecclesial and Xaverian communities.

Pastoral experiences

336. In a personalized formation journey, candidates or formators can orient themselves towards prolonged pastoral experiences in the same Circumscription. These experiences must be well motivated and appropriately monitored. Specifically:

- they should be done only if it is believed they are truly indispensable for the growth of the candidate;
- the community should be chosen carefully;
- a confrere should be chosen *in loco* as a guide to accompany the student and he should be briefed on his personal growth;
- the reasons for this experience, and the goals to be achieved, should be put in writing by the guide and the student;
- at the end of the experience, the guide, in dialogue with the student (and, if possible, with the community), draws up a thorough final report for the Theology Rector, whose task it is to decide whether or not to present the student for subsequent formation stages.

Formation Period in the Missions

337. Xaverian Formation may also provide for a Formation Period in the Mission, in a Xaverian Circumscription other than the one in which Theology is studied.

338. This experience:

- is proposed especially to those who study Theology in their own native country;
- aims is to help candidates acquire some fundamental missionary attitudes, such as: apostolic zeal, unity between action and contemplation, openness to non-Christians, the ability to fulfill a personal life project, service, etc.;
- requires a sufficient period of time (at least two years) for learning the language and insertion into the activities;

- normally takes place before the Final Profession;
- requires a suitable preparation, a constant accompaniment and a thorough assessment.

339. The decision on the Formation Period in the Mission is the competence of the Superior General with his Council, upon the request of the student presented by the Theology Rector.

340. The Theology Rector should accompany the student with a detailed presentation of his development and the goals to be achieved through the experience in the mission. Those who accompany the student should draw up, in dialogue with him, a thorough report on his experience, bearing in mind the goals indicated in the presentation.

341. During these years, the student belongs juridically to the Circumscription that receives him and depends entirely upon it.

5.6 Ongoing formation

342. Formation must lead each individual to willingly embrace a lifelong ongoing formation (*docibilitas*). Initial formation is not enough; it must be continued throughout the missionary's entire life (cf. VC 69; C 72). Ongoing formation is the response to this necessity.

343. Initial and ongoing formation are a single organic process of formation of the consecrated life to the mission (cf. RMX 89). Upon conclusion of initial formation, the demanding and difficult journey of the apostolic life begins. Apostolic work and community life are the privileged place, the source and the stimulus for ongoing growth (cf. RMX 89).

344. Ongoing formation is motivated (cf. Pl 67):

- a. by the very nature of formation, which is open to constant updating and the deepening of personal spiritual and missionary dispositions;
- b. by the charismatic and eschatological nature of the mission;
- c. by the challenge to the Christian faith in a world that is constantly changing;
- d. by the future survival of the Religious Institutes, which depends in part on their members' ability to cultivate a mentality of *aggiornamento* and maintain their spiritual enthusiasm;
- e. by the cultural and geographical changes required by our missionary vocation, by the inculturation of the Christian message, and by the ever new challenges of the mission.

345. Three stages can be identified with distinctive characteristics: early adulthood; adulthood; maturity or old age. These stages are approximate indications and should not be considered in a rigid chronological manner.

Early adulthood: from initial formation to activity

346. Characteristics

The first years of full insertion into apostolic activity are the time of young love and enthusiasm for Christ and the mission. During these years, the individual learns a new way of walking in the life of the Spirit. These years mark the passage from living in formation structures to a community and personal life based more on personal responsibility, resourcefulness and perseverance. In this period of life, certain attitudes of self-sufficiency, dispersion and hyperactivity may emerge; critical self-comparison with the community, the Spiritual Director and other people in the pastoral context may all be weakened. There is also the risk that the first negative experiences may influence the rest of the person's life unless they are integrated into a process of growth.

347. Goals*347.1 In personal formation:*

- a. appropriation and personalization of the typical values of Xaverian consecration in the encounter with a culture other than our own: action and contemplation in order to live our apostolic zeal and welcome those who are different as a richness that flows from the intercultural encounter;
- b. to organize our life in such a way that there is a healthy balance between pastoral activity and personal formation, between work and rest, and between personal and community times;
- c. the ability to start again with confidence after failure, constantly renewing the gift of our vocation, constantly deepening the motivations of our life and action and renewing our trust in the value of interculturality.

347.2. In the apostolic life

- a. the organization of the pastoral life on the model of Christ, the Good Shepherd, developing a pastoral love of dedication and attention, especially to the most needy persons;
- b. to enter a new situation with respect and trust, in openness to those we meet and trying to know and appreciate the persons and values of the host culture, without ignoring their objective limits;
- c. a good knowledge of the local language and culture, so that we can present the Christian message with cultural categories proper to the setting “in a way that is as understandable and persuasive as possible” (EN 3).

348. Methodological guidelines

- a. The reformulation of the personal life project is indispensable for a suitable insertion into the new reality, and for reviewing the organization of our life in the light of the Gospel and the charism.
- b. The daily *Lectio divina* enables us to know and love the Word of God and to proclaim it effectively and it must occupy an important place in the day.

- c. The constant verification of the motivations of our life and action, in order to find new ways of being faithful to Christ (cf. Pl 70) and to discover what is essential in our proclamation.
- d. The local community, especially those in charge, must give the indispensable help for a gradual insertion into the reality and the apostolic work, especially in relation to the knowledge of persons, programs and apostolic activities.
- e. Those who join a Circumscription different from their own must be given sufficient time to learn the language, know the culture, local history and the pastoral program. An adequate specific preparation is necessary for the activity to which they are assigned.

Adulthood: full maturity

349. Characteristics

The passing of time can promote growth, but it can also lead to moments of crisis, even profound ones.

The offering of self can be purified, become more transparent and rich in grace and, at the same time, more serene and discrete. However, the journey of spiritual growth may also fall prey to disappointment caused by the lack of results, inner fatigue and a certain presumption and self-sufficiency that may lead to self-absorption or crisis. This period of life is normally the time for taking on greater responsibilities, with the risk of individualism, especially “among those of an active and vigorous temperament” (Pl 70).

350. Goals

- a. The ability to elaborate a vision in new contexts that is consistent with the Gospel, by responding to problems in a way that challenges already established solutions.
- b. Perseverance in living the values of the Gospel.
- c. Constant attention to the life of faith and to our own spiritual journey, in the understanding of the founding values of our life and our mission, and in growth towards full maturity in Christ (cf. Eph 4:13).

- d. Acceptance of our limits, willingness to accept criticism in relation to our personal life, work and projects and striving to achieve reconciliation with ourselves.

351. Methodological guidelines

- a. Focus on the essential.
- b. Constantly seek new motivations for our mission and consecration.
- c. Cultivate spiritual direction as an indispensable instrument and normal practice.
- d. Emphasize fidelity to daily practices: meditation, the celebration of the Eucharist, prayer, study and fidelity to the personal and community life projects (cf. XVI GC 149-150).
- e. Allow ourselves to be helped to interpret our life and activities in the light of God's grace and action, rather than by our own strengths and abilities, especially in times of crisis, which can arrive at any age, but more easily at the beginning of this stage of life.
- f. Use the instruments for renewal provided by the Congregation.

Old age: progressive withdrawal from active life

352. Characteristics

Old age, although it is looked upon as the progressive withdrawal from active life, brings with itself not only problems, but also a greater opportunity to conform ourselves to Christ who gives his life. It is the time of pure love and waiting for the Lord, which must be lived actively as one of the stages of our ongoing formation.

Some confreres, when their strength declines, seek refuge in "early retirement" from active life. If a confrere still has strength and energy, he should dedicate himself generously to the work assigned to him, offering the community the experience and the wisdom he has accumulated over the years.

In some cases, progressive withdrawal from activity, illness and forced inactivity are experiences that can be very formative and self-giving. It is sometimes a difficult experience, yet it offers elderly religious an

opportunity to embrace the paschal mystery, by identifying with Christ who fulfills the Father's will in all things (cf. Pl 70).

353. Goals

- a. To live this stage of life as an event of grace, personal growth and authentic personal formation.
- b. To embrace longevity as something good and as a gift for self and others.
- c. To accept fully the inevitable law of passing time, mindful that "prayer is the principal activity of the missionary" (C 43) and that our being missionaries is not dependent on activity.
- d. To accept life in its times of joy and suffering, and to live the present in total freedom, lucidity and maturity and with an optimistic outlook, because everything is gift and grace.
- e. To live "illness and physical suffering in the spirit of the Man of Sorrows as an experience endowed with efficacious redemptive power, of no less value than that of our apostolic work" (C 48).

354. Methodological guidelines

It is important that we prepare for this stage of life when we are still young, by cultivating the attitudes and values typical of adulthood, in the conviction that the value of our life is measured by what we are, and not by what we do (cf. RMX 93-96). Aware of this, the Congregation reserves a special attention to the sick and elderly confreres (cf. FR 47), and encourages them:

- a. to offer their physical, psychological and spiritual situation to God so as to live old age in union with Jesus Christ, and in communion with the other confreres, by paying attention to their needs;
- b. to remain active for as long as possible through the services and activities offered by the community and that can be carried out also by the elderly;
- c. to consider this time as an opportunity to live the Paschal mystery more fully, by preparing for the encounter with God, and in the con-

- viction that this period of life is also to be considered as mission (C 48);
- d. to give time to prayer and spiritual and formative reading, savoring the simple joys of community life;
 - e. to welcome the present time with its problems, contradictions and struggles of old age, reconciling ourselves with our past in order to make it a grateful memory and an offering to the Lord in favor of the mission.

Contents

(NB. These are valid for all the stages of ongoing formation)

355. *Missionary purpose*

- a. Availability for the ministry, missionary animation and the various house commitments.
- b. A moderate lifestyle in view of solidarity with others.
- c. Humility to learn from others and from other cultures.
- d. Knowledge of the social-cultural reality in view of a better insertion.
- e. Prayer for the Congregation and the mission.

356. *Christ-centered spirituality*

- a. We should always venerate the icon of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gave himself until death and who is now present among us in the Eucharist.
- b. The Word of God as our daily nourishment.
- c. Prayer as the principal activity of the missionary (C 43).
- d. The value of silence and reflection in a world that is full of noise and turmoil.

357. *Religious consecration*

- a. Fidelity and joy in living our vocation, in the conviction that the profession of the evangelical counsels, combined with the vow to consecrate our lives to spreading the Kingdom, is the most sublime life possible (cf. FR 65).
- b. The community as the principal agent of our mission.

- c. The apostolic commitment as the expression of fidelity and creativity in living our consecration.
- d. The apostolic efficacy of the vows lived with total and serene commitment.

358. *Family characteristic*

- a. A constantly cultivated sense of belonging to, and love for, the Xaverian Family, its members and its projects.
- b. Observance of the community life project.
- c. The anthropological-cultural setting as the criterion for community choices regarding lifestyle, language, food, timetables and structures.
- d. Acceptance of all the confreres in order to build communities where the family spirit, respect, sharing and collaboration reign.
- e. To love the Xaverian Family by cultivating unity in love and corresponsibility.
- f. To let ourselves be loved and taken care of by appreciating what the community does for us.

359. *The Xaverian's humanity*

- a. To express the human face of Christ and the beauty of the apostolic life through a strong drive towards holiness.
- b. To live a love rich in affection and humanity for the confreres.
- c. To face daily life with a spirit of faith, through a moderate lifestyle that is full of joy, optimistic and always open to new initiatives.
- d. Openness to the needs of the confreres and the ability to fraternize with them, by sharing our time, or by giving them the opportunity to express themselves.
- e. To live the spirit of apostolic paternity and welcome.

Structures

360. There are two areas connected with ongoing formation: the role or the activity with its relative specializations and the area of personal growth.

361. Responsibility for ongoing formation lies, at different levels, with the individual, the community, the Regional Direction and the General Direction.

362. “The primary responsibility for ongoing formation lies with each Xaverian” (GR 72.1). Through the personal life project, each individual must organize his own life, with balance between rest and times for reflection, community life and apostolic activity, such as to allow him a constant growth and personal fulfillment.

363. The ordinary instruments for spiritual growth in daily life, in dialogue with a spiritual director, are: prayer and daily Eucharist, meditation, reconciliation, the breviary, study, encounter with people and reflection on life, events and the problems of the world.

364. The instruments for spiritual growth, and the local, Regional and general structures, must help each individual:

- a. to reflect on his situation: who I am now, how I accept myself, how I live in community, how I carry out my ministry;
- b. to examine himself against the typical values of our life: Word of God, consecration, mission, charism;
- c. to review his personal life project, in order to follow Christ generously and proclaim him with renewed enthusiasm.

365. The following community meetings are indispensable for an ongoing formation that is lived in an atmosphere of fraternity: local community meetings (if possible, every week) for the communication of life and exchange of experiences, monthly retreats, annual spiritual exercises, pastoral meetings for the planning of activities, preparation of the community life project.

366. It is the task of the Regional Direction, in communion with the General Direction, to organize specializations for the confreres; to organize

meetings to qualify their spiritual life and specifically missionary activity. Attention to persons should be the main concern of the Regional Superior.

367. The General Direction must provide the confreres with opportunities to take part in ongoing formation courses or initiatives, by organizing:

- a.** conferences on formation and the services requested of the confreres;
- b.** distribution of material and aids;
- c.** periods of community life for various categories of confreres to help strengthen their sense of belonging to the Xaverian Family.

Chapter Six

VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

“The missionary vocation requires a sound human basis of intellectual, spiritual and apostolic aptitudes that make for continual growth leading to a joyful personal fulfillment. This growth of each candidate is to be assessed at each stage of the formation process” (C 59).

In this chapter

- 6.1 INTRODUCTION
- 6.2 CONTRAINDICATIONS
 - Juridical contraindications
 - Prudential contraindications
- 6.3 POSITIVE CRITERIA
 - Human suitability
 - Christian suitability
 - Xaverian suitability
- 6.4 THE DECISIVE VOCATIONAL SIGN

6.1 Introduction

368. Discernment is a search for God's will through a serene comparison between the person called and the Congregation's charism. This search involves the candidate, the formator, the community, the Congregation and the Church. It is not exclusive to initial formation, even though this is a privileged time for such discernment, especially at the move from one stage to another and the final commitments.

369. The candidates' initial dispositions are normally not yet fully acquired habits and lifestyles. At every stage, we must carefully verify that their development has reached the necessary level for taking on the connected commitments, and that its rhythm and vitality are maintained in such a way as to guarantee the positive outcome of the subsequent stages.

370. This verification is made easier, and more objective, by the use of the personal files that accompany candidates throughout their formation journey. They should always be compiled by the formators with diligence and a great sense of responsibility.

371. In this progressive and profound vocational discernment, the formator cannot exclude the contribution of the community and the psychological-pedagogical sciences, a frank personal dialogue with the candidate and his sincere collaboration, which is the fruit of mutual trust and love for truth and for persons.

6.2 Contraindications

Juridical contraindications

372. The criteria listed in Canon Law to exclude *a priori* the existence, or the viability, of a vocation to the religious life, or to the priesthood:

- a. for the admission to the Novitiate and to the religious profession: CIC 643; 648; 656; 658;
- b. for the admission to the Diaconate and the Priesthood: CIC 1025; 1031; 1033; 1035–38; 1040–42; 1044.

373. In these cases, if after a careful and thorough assessment of all the elements involved, judgment is made in favor of admission in spite of the presence of a juridical impediment, a dispensation must be obtained before admission to Novitiate, including those pertinent to future admission to Holy Orders.

374. “In order to admit a candidate to ordination to the Diaconate, the Church must verify, among other things, that the candidate has reached affective maturity”. Special attention, which is “made more urgent by the current situation”, must be given to the problem of homosexuality. In this sense, we “cannot admit to the seminary or to Holy Orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called “gay culture” (*Instruction of the Congregation for Catholic Education concerning the criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to seminary and to Holy Orders*, 4 November 2005).

375. Great attention, including the help of experts, must be given to grave psychological disturbances, such as: depressive tendencies, manic disorder, hypomania, bipolar disturbances, as well as attitudes that might reveal pedophile and ephebophile tendencies or other forms of paraphilia (exhibitionism, fetishism, sadomasochism, cross-dressing, voyeurism).

376. The following may indicate deviant tendencies:

- a. the inability to relate, in a mature manner, to adults of the same age;
- b. a narcissistic personality;

- c. the tendency to associate the priesthood with power, and to see vocation more as a status symbol rather than as a mission to be fulfilled;
- d. a habitual distorted relationship with sexuality;
- e. passive or excessively submissive attitudes.

377. A candidate who has committed acts of pedophilia or ephebophilia during formation must be dismissed; if such behavior has occurred before joining a formation community, the candidate must not be admitted. This also applies to candidates who have accessed child pornography websites. We shall adhere to local legislation in matters concerning the penal consequences of such behaviors (cf. SST; *Ad exsequendam ecclesiasticam legem*).

Prudential contraindications

378. It is inadvisable to admit candidates with physical or psychological problems that will certainly, or very probably, make it difficult for them to live a serene and committed life in obedience, chastity, poverty, apostolic work and community life (cf. CIC 642).

This category includes family situations that have left a more or less profound mark on the individual's psychological balance, such as hereditary defects or emotional deprivation. These personal and family aspects should be carefully examined, through a good knowledge of the family and by consultation with competent physicians and psychologists (cf. OT 6; *Ratio generale dei Seminari della Congregazione per l'Educazione Cattolica*, no. 39).

379. A candidate's physical and psychological suitability must be verified through diagnostic examinations, including testing for HIV and hepatitis, either before or immediately after the beginning of the formation journey. These tests do not present or raise any questions of an ethical nature.

380. If a candidate in formation tests positive in a diagnostic test, the matter should be carefully assessed in dialogue with the General Direction.

381. Some specific situations call for special attention, given their influence on missionary formation, such as the case of an only child, an illegitimate or adopted child and, in certain cultures, a first-born child or one who has essential duties and responsibilities within their family. Without excluding any candidate *a priori*, these cases should be carefully assessed in relation to all the future implications for the candidate and his family.

382. The age of candidates is also very important since we, as missionaries, are called to a great community, cultural and pastoral flexibility.

383. Every Circumscription should establish the minimum and the maximum age for accepting candidates, bearing in mind, among other things, the academic curriculum of each candidate and the level of studies at the school he attended. Any exceptions must be well-pondered and must obtain the approval of the Regional Superior with his Council, bearing in mind the norm concerning the age for admission to Novitiate (cf. GR 63:1).

384. Candidates who have been dismissed from other seminaries or Institutes after their eighteenth year of age are normally not accepted. Any exceptions must be submitted to the judgment of the Regional Superior with his Council.

385. A thorough discernment should be made in the case of candidates who are still in formation in the seminaries of other Congregations or dioceses. A written presentation of their formators is necessary. The decision to accept such candidates is the competence of the Regional Superior with his Council. (cf. CIC 2413; *Istruzioni sull'ammissione in seminario di candidati provenienti da altri seminari o Famiglie religiose*, XLV Assemblée Generale CEI, 8 Marzo 1996; *Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 16).

6.3 Positive criteria

386. The mere absence of contraindications is not enough for admission: the suitability of a candidate must be proved by positive arguments (cf. CIC 1052; *Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood*, 11). These positive arguments are only an indication of a possible vocation, not its actual existence. The human, Christian and Xaverian suitability are among these positive criteria.

Human suitability

387. In assessing the human suitability of a candidate, we must bear in mind:

- a. a sufficient degree of psychological-physical health, such as to permit the Xaverian candidate to adapt to the change of food, climate, etc., and to the psychological stress that derives from difficult environmental conditions, and from living in foreign countries and situations that are often precarious;
- b. an emotional and sexual maturation proportionate to the candidate's age, and such as to predict a serene life in religious consecration and the pastoral ministry;
- c. a balanced temperament that is generous, strong and sociable, with a sense of responsibility and a healthy sense of humor; open, loyal, sensitive to the demands of justice and solidarity; industrious and resourceful; patient and persevering, in spite of difficulties and obstacles (cf. FR 52; 69);
- d. a sufficient intellectual ability for obtaining the normal secondary school diplomas, and the ability to complete the philosophical and theological curriculum, with the aptitude to learn foreign languages well and a critical-empathic approach towards cultures and religions;
- e. the ability to engage in mature and gratuitous interpersonal relationships and work as part of a group, knowing how to accept personal limits and the limits of others, bearing in mind the fact that we are

called to live together and work with confreres of different origins and nationalities.

Christian suitability

388. Discipleship requires:

- a. a clear desire for human-Christian growth: life of prayer, application to study and to work, zeal for community life, availability to service;
- b. a balanced ability to see persons, events and things in the light of the faith and the Word of God, in accordance with the values of the Gospel;
- c. an adequate deepening and rhythm of prayer and sacramental life, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation;
- d. an openness to a verification of one's own life in sincere dialogue with the formator;
- e. a joyfully lived Christian life that is embodied in some apostolic commitment of incarnation and solidarity, proportionate to the candidate's age.

Xaverian suitability


389. Being a Xaverian entails:

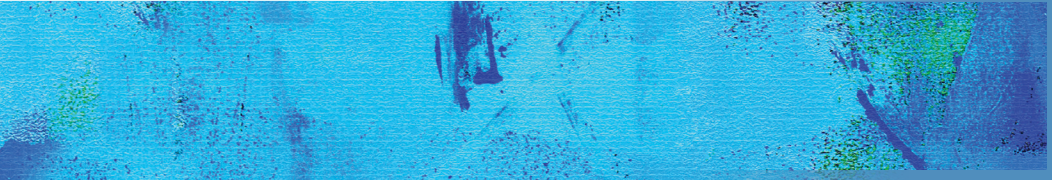
- a. a clear orientation to, and suitability for, the missionary life *ad gentes, ad extra, ad vitam*, to which the Xaverians must "give, *oboedentia duce*, the best of themselves" (FR 6);
- b. a sense of belonging to the Xaverian Family;
- c. knowledge of the Founder, the charism, the history and the current situation of the Congregation in the different contexts in which it is working;
- d. personal harmony with the specific choices and apostolic activities of the Xaverian Family, with the possibility of embracing in it a specific ministry, either as a missionary brother or priest;
- e. a true acceptance of the religious-community dimension of the Institute and the obligations that derive from it, in view of a more radical service to the mission of Christ, in the Church of God (TL 1–2).

6.4 The decisive vocation sign

390. The presence of the above listed qualities and attitudes is undoubtedly a first objective sign of vocation. Nevertheless, these indications must be accompanied *conditio sine qua non* by the one that is defined as the most characteristic and indispensable sign: the right intention; in other words, the clear and firm desire to consecrate oneself entirely to God in the Xaverian Congregation, a decision that must be confirmed by the mediators chosen by God and appointed by the Church for this purpose (cf. SDV 17–18).

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