

VICE-PROVINCIA EXTRA PATRIAM – 3401

FORMATION COMMITTEE

PARTICULAR FORMATION PROGRAM

I. INTRODUCTION:

1. The purpose of formation must first of all be made clear: “To lead the candidates and the members to such a degree of human and Christian maturity that, with the help of God’s grace, they will be able to dedicate themselves intelligently, willingly and wholeheartedly to the service of the missionary Church in Redemptorist community life, in order to preach the Gospel to the poor” (*CSsR Constitutions*, no. 78).

2. Recognizing the utmost importance of formation and following the request of the General Government in the *2003 Ratio Formationis*, this particular formation program of the Vietnamese Vice-Province is born and updated. It serves as an aid to help students and members to live to the full their vocation within the Church Community as Redemptorists who joyfully dedicate their life for the plentiful redemption of God.

This ratio offers both directions for formators and practical guidelines for students in their discernment of the Redemptorist vocation. Each day of student life is the grace of God. Authentic life in God’s grace is achieved when the Redemptorist spirituality and charisma are practiced. May the Holy Spirit enkindle each student so that he can discover the life-carried spirit through these guidelines and “*be for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of god, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ*” (Eph. 4:12-13).

II. REDEMPTORIST VOCATION AND FORMATION

03. Consecrated life always remains as a gift and a mystery to all. This is more particularly true of the Redemptorist vocation, which exists in and for the Church. The Redemptorist identity is found within the Church and is inseparably linked with the very mission that the Church has received from her Lord: “*Go and make disciples of all nations*” (Mt 28:19).

04. Redemptorist formation aims to help students in both vocations, clerical and brotherhood, appreciate their life and vocation as ones chosen by God, and be ever ready for the mission given to them by the Church, and particularly by their Lord Jesus Christ who speaks of himself: “*The Holy Spirit is upon me, for he has anointed me; He sent me to preach the Good News to the poor*”.

05. This program of formation is also not without the vision of goals that have been set out by our *Constitutions and Statutes*: “The aim of formation for both candidates and members is to lead them to such a degree of human and Christian maturity that, with the help of God’s grace, they will be able to dedicate themselves intelligently, willingly and wholeheartedly, to the service of the missionary Church in Redemptorist community life, in order to preach the Gospel to the poor” (C. 78).

06. Thus, the Redemptorist formation carries within itself a holistic view, which means it will specifically cover five most important dimensions of formation: human, spiritual, community, academic and pastoral. All of these aspects are set out to form a missionary spirit and adeptly equip students for their future missions as true Redemptorists.

07. The Vice-Province is always open to the acceptance of those entering to be Redemptorist priests and brothers. Though different in formations but they are to acquire the same zeal and spirit of true Redemptorist missionaries: *“Strong in faith, rejoicing in hope, burning with charity, on fire with zeal, in humility of heart and persevering in prayer”* (C. 20).

III. DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION

A. HUMAN MATURITY

08. *Vita Consecrata* makes it very clear: “The object of formation is the whole person, called to seek and love God, ‘with all one’s heart, and with all one’s soul, and with all one’s might’ and one’s neighbor as oneself... The human and fraternal dimensions of the consecrated life call for self-knowledge and the awareness of personal limitations, so as to offer its members the inspiration and support needed on the path towards perfect freedom” (no. 71).

09. Thus certain human qualities that should be fostered in the life of the candidates during this human formation are:

- Freedom and openness
- Charity towards others
- Ability to cooperate with others
- Honesty and flexibility
- Personal responsibility
- Ability to make balanced judgment and decisions
- Growth in moral sensibility and character
- Capacity for play and relaxation as means for expressing and integrating the whole personality.
- Growth of love for the poor

10. Formators in both formation houses are to see that the students’ life should always be balanced between spiritual, intellectual and physical wellness. Thus, recreation and rest are necessary elements of life. Recreation should bring students benefits of refreshment as well as psychological and physical balance. It should be a time of formation. This means students should avoid all unavailing and unhelpful activities. In the formation time, the formation personnel will point out the appropriate activities for the students. Television, newspapers, music, games, and exercises have their own advantages. However, it is necessary to define the advantages clearly. For example, in the case of watching television, not all programs are appropriate; furthermore, students should watch only at appointed time. This is the same with movies and music, and so on. Schedule in the formation houses should have a concrete and definite time for recreation. Among all recreation activities, physical exercise is of utmost important and should be encouraged.

11. There should be long-term and short-term vacations during the school year. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Easter and Spring Breaks are considered as short-term vacations. In these short-term vacations, various indoor and outdoor activities should be fostered. For example, they can attend special workshops, go camping, visit the poor, recruit vocations together, etc. Specific activities are to be determined by the formation faculty.

With regard to long-term vacations, i.e. summer, a more detailed schedule for both formation houses is:

- *Three weeks vacation to visit their families*
- *One week for “Come & See”*
- *One week of gathering for two formation houses to work on their Annual Redemptorist Student Magazine*

- *Annual retreat week*
- *Preparing for ordination, profession, or novitiate*
- *One month of living with the poor in Viet Nam for first year Theology students*
- *One month or longer working in an apostolic house or parish for second year Theology students*
- *Special workshops on Scriptures*
- *Community activities*
- *The remaining of summer is reserved to prepare for the next academic year*

Summer is also the time for the students to work on their weak areas of studies, to read spiritual books and to strengthen their community life. It is not a time for leisure. In addition, they will organize a youth camp (The Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement), and publish articles (for Annual Redemptorist Student Magazine). Every student should contribute ideas and suggestions in order to make the summer or practical and animated.

B. SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

12. Human formation should lead to and find its completion in the spiritual formation. Spiritual life takes highest priority in the formation of a Redemptorist student. Prayer and liturgical worship are clear manifestations of religious life. Thus, spiritual formation is:

- To develop one's awareness of spiritual needs
- To deepen one's love for the Eucharist and prayer life
- To provide adequate time in the daily schedule for meditation on the Word of God with a strong emphasis on the Alphonsian method of mental prayer.
- To form the Redemptorist identity and appreciate the Alphonsian charism.
- To encourage visits to the Blessed Sacrament and other forms of devotion in the spirit of Alphonsian tradition.
- To foster frequent personal and communal celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- To provide monthly days of recollection and annual retreat.

13. Consequently, daily activities must be composed of personal virtuous deeds and community worships. The communal celebration of the Eucharist and of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharistic visits and saying of the rosary are essential in the Redemptorist life. Furthermore, other highly-advocated devotions are Eucharistic hours, Stations of the Cross, Our Mother of Perpetual Help novenas, etc. These devout acts are incorporated into daily, weekly and monthly schedules of both formation houses. All is intended to help the students meet God through the Church's traditional devotions and worships, and to create a prayerful atmosphere in a religious house. Any attitudes of laxism and carelessness in one's spiritual life can be signs of not having the religious vocation, let alone the Redemptorist vocation.

14. Both houses of formation have specific monthly days of recollection. Normally it takes place on the first weekend of the month. The day is devoted to prayer, recollection, spiritual direction, examination of conscience, and confession. Communal evaluation is also included as a chance for each member to recognize his own strengths and weaknesses and those of the community. Therefore, this monthly recollection should not be voided by any mean. We should see it as a spiritual essential, “sine qua non.”

It should be added that the following important litanies need to be part of the daily liturgy: The *Holy Spirit invocation* in the morning; the *Angelus*, three times a day; the *Redemptorist vocation prayer* in the morning; *Salve Regina*, for perseverance; and *repentance prayer*, at bed time.

15. The Vice-provincial Council will appoint a spiritual director for each formation house to direct the students' spiritual life according to St. Alphonsus' spirituality. His role is both as a master and a companion on the students' spiritual journey. The formation prefect and the spiritual director should work closely with one another in order to monitor each student's spiritual growth.

Even though each formation house has its own spiritual director, students can, with the permission of the prefect, find a spiritual director for their own at the seminary or in the area.

16. Confession should always be a 'spiritual concern' for both the Formation Committee and the students themselves. Students should receive the sacrament of confession at least once a month, and on other special occasions such as days of Solemnity or on retreats. One's humble acknowledgement of his sinfulness is a basic attitude before God's infinite love. One's lacking of modesty, before God as well as his brothers, will lead to failures in religious life.

17. As our founder St. Alphonsus has instructed, a Redemptorist student needs to spend at least fifteen to twenty minutes reading spiritual books everyday. Spiritual reading is a nourishing food for his soul. A selection of spiritual readings or books should be made in consultation with the academic superior or his spiritual director. However, among all spiritual readings, Scriptures must be particularly stressed. "Ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ," says St. Jerome. Our *Constitutions and Statutes* says it very clearly: "Since their duty one day will be to preach the word of God, they must be abundantly nourished by it" (C. 81).

Other spiritual books include those written by St. Alphonsus himself or by other confreres/writers about the history, traditions, charism and spirituality of our Congregation.

18. Several points should be said about the devotions to Mary. Redemptorist spirituality cannot lack the Marian dimension of life. The *Communicanda No. 1* of the XXII General Chapter is very clear on this: "Our devotion to the Mother of Perpetual Help should be greater and more apparent in our spirituality; it can help to make our charism better understood" (n. 25). Therefore, each formation house should install means to promote among the students devotions to Mary. Saying the rosary daily and doing weekly Novenas to Our Mother of Perpetual Help are the Congregation's well-known and should continue to be preserved and fostered. The Church and our Congregation have a long tradition of dedicating Saturdays to the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and special celebrations of Her annual Feast Days, particularly the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, patroness of the Congregation, and the Feast of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, whose devotion crusade was exclusively assigned to our Congregation by Pope Pius IX.

C. COMMUNITY LIFE

19. Redemptorist formation and charism is inseparably linked with a strong community dimension. However, true community does not exist when "members merely live together; it requires as well genuine sharing on the human and spiritual level. The whole purpose of community life is to have members, like the apostles (cf. Mk 3:14; Acts 2:42-45), in spirit of genuine brotherly union, combine their prayers and deliberations, their labors and sufferings, their successes and failures, and their material goods as well, for the service of the Gospel" (CC. 21-22). Thus, on this dimension of formation, we strive to:

- help candidates have a sense of belonging to the community where their love for one another is solid and genuine.
- enhance the candidates' concern for one another.

- foster the desire to live the ideal of life in community while at the same time accept the limitations of the community.

- promote a true sense of personal and communal responsibility.
- to provide regular times for communal activities and recreation.
- to provide opportunities for candidates to work together in the apostolate.

20. Recognizing that as Redemptorist missionaries who will be fulfilling their mission in the Church together “as a community” (C. 21), this community dimension should always be considered as essential part in every schedule and activity, while keeping in mind that “at the heart of the community, to form and sustain it, is the Redeemer himself and his Spirit of love” (C. 23).

21. In the present circumstances, the Studentate is divided into two houses: one for theology students (Houston, TX) and the other for philosophy students (Dallas, TX). A house is canonically instituted when the number of priests and professed students meets the required quota for a community. Whether or not a house is officially instituted, it is still organized like a Redemptorist religious house, with a genuine spirit of religious life.

Should a formation house belong to a religious house, then in addition to its own structure of formation, according to article 88 of the Constitutions, all students are under the direction of their academic superior, while the formation house is under the supervision of the religious house superior. The Vice-Provincial Council will appoint a Students Prefect who will be coordinating the formation program and responsible for all students’ activities.

22. Religious life in a monastery is a life of prayer, study and work. Hence, a reflective spirit, interior as well as exterior, is a must for this kind of life. Every student ought to maintain a quiet atmosphere, except for the time of recreation and allotted talking-time. Especially in the Chapel and in the common rooms, students need to respect others by creating an atmosphere of prayerful silence. Still, the essential element here is prayer, charity and respect toward others.

23. Silence is particularly stressed and required on special occasions such as annual or monthly day(s) of recollection, short silence and grand silence, a specified time of the day. If a member of the community gets sick, a certain level of quietness is obligatory. However, this is still only external silence. What is more important and considered as an indispensable element is the interior silence of one’s heart, where he can ceaselessly meet, communicate and be united with God. Such silence will eventually lead to a deeper relationship with God.

The words of the XXII General Chapter on Spirituality deserve our reflection: “A style of life which is perpetually superficial, incapable of meditation or concentration on the Word of God or even to observe silence, is not a sound foundation for any form of spirituality” (*Communicanda I*, no. 30).

D. ACADEMIC STUDY

24. Intellectual formation is integral to what it means to be human. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “intellectual formation... is a fundamental demand of man’s intelligence by which he ‘participates in the light of God’s mind’ and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God” (*Pastores dabo Vobis*, no. 51, citing *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 15).

25. It is even more important and fundamental in the life of a religious missionary. Intellectual training serves as “an aid for understanding our present reality, or as a tool for evangelizing culture” (2003 *Ratio Formationis*, no. 47). Thus, underestimating the importance and value of human intellectual formation can lead to serious consequences on the candidates’ future life and apostolate. However, it must

be made clear to all that intellectual training is not done for its own sake, but rather for the love of God and the salvation of souls.

26. The academic standards and requirements demanded by the Church for every priest must be met by all who pursue the priestly vocation. For those in the brotherhood vocation, even though they are not required to meet these academic standards, they should take every opportunity to attain certain knowledge of theology and to develop their talents and acquire professional skills useful for ministry in the Vice-Province.

27. Each student has to consider academic as one of the pivotal elements and have a strong commitment for it. After spirituality, academic study takes its priority over all other activities. As a result, students should limit their time in watching television, going out, and having unnecessary guest receptions.

Because of having the same vocation and sharing the same mission, students should share their knowledge with one another and help each other so that there is a comparable level among themselves. They compete, encourage and assist each other. Together and creatively, they work on improving the way of studying.

E. PASTORAL DIMENSION

28. The pastoral dimension should never be out of sight in the formation and life of a Redemptorist missionary. In fact, it is a part of him. The General Statute of our Congregation is very clear on this: “The pastoral orientation of the whole course of training is a distinctive feature of missionary formation, and this must be clearly in evidence. Everything relating to formation, both studies and spiritual life, must be combined with practical apostolic exercises and experience, in order that the candidates may be able to renew and increase their own faith in the mystery of salvation and so be prepared to preach the Gospel with confidence to others” (no. 058)

29. All candidates should be reminded of the purpose/charism of our Congregation: preaching the good news to the poor and the most abandoned, so that they may be guided by these basic values in their future work and apostolic choices. In addition, they should also be provided opportunities to know and acquaint with both the apostolic work of the Vice-Province and its priorities so that they can better prepare themselves for their future apostolate.

30. Practical pastoral assignments will be given to all candidates in both houses of formation, whether they are in priestly vocation or brotherhood. The time and kind of pastoral work will be determined by the formation faculty.

31. Summer time is particularly reserved for apostolic and missionary activities. The students will be sent to religious or professional seminars if the circumstance is allowable. Also, we don’t exclude the experience of working in a refugee camp or living in a third-world country with and for the poor. These events need to be parts of a comprehensive formation program. For instance, one whole year of the formation program can be assigned for missionary work in a poor area belonging to our vice-province or other Redemptorist provinces, etc. All these activities are for one purpose: to develop the candidates’ missionary spirit and readiness to evangelize.

F. EVALUATIONS OF CANDIDATES:

Evaluations are to be made on a regular basis. Respective formators receive students' own evaluations, which comprise spiritual dimension, community dimension, academic dimension, pastoral dimension, and human dimension. Human dimension includes physical, emotional, and psychological aspects. Spiritual dimension includes prayer, personal faith, and moral responses. Community dimension includes development in interpersonal skills necessary to live and work in an apostolic community. Academic dimension includes growth in all human and sacred sciences. Pastoral dimension includes ability to work with the poor.

Inputs from principal formators, community superiors, professors, fellow students are all appraised regarding these dimensions. Positive and negative aspects should be discussed with the students in such a way that they understand those areas and opportunity and time to grow.

At time prior to first and final profession, as well as ordination, the evaluations are more comprehensive.

The main stages are: the postulancy, the novitiate, and the period of first profession-to-end of initial formation. In each stage, the elements to be evaluated are as follows:

The postulancy: growth of the candidate's knowledge of self, culture and history; suitability for religious life; clarification of his experience of vocation; understanding of history, charism, spirituality of the Congregation, lives of the Redemptorist's saints and the blessed; personal responsibility, trust, attitudes and skills in community life; aptitude in academic works; and recognition of role as member of the Church and service in apostolate.

The novitiate: better discernment of the work of God in candidate's life; growth in awareness of own sexuality and its integration to celibacy; discernment of own spiritual journey; acquiring the habit of personal and communal prayer; appreciation of Redemptorist spirituality and history; ability to accept the will of God; growth and experience of community life as a place of faith, service and acceptance of others in fraternity; growth in love for and desire to work for the Church and the Congregation; study of the history, the Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation; and spiritual reflection on apostolic experience and commitment to the most abandoned and the poor.

First profession to the end of initial formation: conviction about his vocation to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; suitability for apostolic life; good integration of own systematic studies with personal faith; appreciation of the vows and of religious missionary life; knowledge and appreciation of St. Alphonsus's teachings, our history; appreciation and love for the mystery of community life as a "prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Good News" (*Comm 11*, 1988, n.51); growth in ability to interact with other confreres and with superiors, to accept responsibility for the community life, to have and appreciate friendship with persons of both sexes, to face and resolve in Christian manner conflicts; a demonstrated ability to live according to the Gospel values and the vows; and a strong desire to live and work in the Congregation for life.

IV. STAGES OF FORMATION

A. INITIAL CONTACT

32. Formation starts from the very first moment when young people encounter a Redemptorist. It is very important, therefore, for us to be actively "open to young people", according to the vision of the XXI General Chapter (1991 *Final Document*, n.56).

33. What “attracts” young people to the consecrated life in general, and to the Redemptorist vocation in particular, is not our talents, our works, our successes, though they themselves are very important and necessary. The most important factor in attracting the youth is our own holiness of life. It is God who loves, calls and nourishes the vocation of each. Our task, as Jesus said, is to pray for vocations. This task does not belong to any individual but to all members as the *Constitutions and Statutes* says: “All the confreres, out of love and appreciation for their own vocation, should zealously engage in the apostolate of fostering vocations to the Congregation” (C.79).

34. A Vocation Director is to be appointed by the Vice-Provincial Council. He and his team work collaboratively in finding ways “to detect, to accompany, and to discern the vocational aptitude of a candidate” (2003 *Ratio Formationis*, n.74).

35. Besides taking advantage of encountering young people in almost every Youth Conferences and Vocations Day, the Vocation Office also has the tradition of organizing two Annual Vocations Discernment Programs, one in the winter and one in the summer. These vocational activities have proved very effective and born much fruits.

36. With regards to the admission process, the candidates must have the requisite qualities, such as “a right intention... a sufficiently broad knowledge of the doctrine of the faith, some introduction to the methods of prayer, and behavior in conformity with Christian tradition” (*Pastores dabō Vobis*, n.62). They should also have attained, at least in some degrees, growth in important areas of formation, i.e. human, spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and community life. These minimal qualities are necessary for them to develop higher level of religious and priestly formation. However, it would be unrealistic to expect a candidate for admission to be fully mature in all aspects.

37. In addition to the requirements mentioned above, the candidates are also expected to participate in at least one Vocational Discernment Program, which is commonly called the “*Come & See Days*”, organized by the Vice-Provincial Vocations Office. To enter, candidates must be over 18 years old and have at least completed High School. Upon recommendations from those in charge of the candidates’ previous education and activities, and after gathering and verifying all necessary documents, they are to be admitted into the Postulancy Program which currently takes place at the Redemptorist Postulant House in Dallas, TX.

B. POSTULANCY

38. The Postulancy is divided into two stages: initial postulancy and pre-novitiate, each of which can last from 1 to 2 years or be determined by the Secretariat of Formation upon each case.

39. The general objective of postulancy is already set out by the 2003 *Ratio Formationis*: “To accompany a candidate in his first experience of Redemptorist Apostolic Life” (no.82). Thus, it is very important for a candidate to truly experience the genuine love of brotherhood among the members living in the same communities. This relationship among members helps the new candidate to “know himself better and be known by others in order to discern his vocation prior to entering the Novitiate” (ibid).

40a. One of the primary goals during this period of time is the students’ human maturity. The human dimension of each member is particularly focused in order to help him advance in the necessary human qualities and build a solid foundation upon which his spiritual maturity is based. Thus, no matter how tight the schedule is, there must be space and time for workshops on human development, for community recreation and physical exercises. Students are taught how to take care of his health and physical body in a balanced way.

b. Human formation: The whole topic of sexuality is one of the daunting challenges facing formators. With our candidates, their backgrounds present two very different cultures, Western from those who grew up here and Eastern from immigrants. In the United States, sexuality is highly eroticized and aware of from an early age, whereas in Viet Nam, sexuality is a private reality rarely mentioned. The formation for celibacy aims to provide a healthy understanding and appreciation of human sexuality, Church teachings and Redemptorist Constitutions on celibacy and chastity, and appreciation for human intimacy appropriate to celibacy in community, understanding of professional boundaries in ministry. Workshops are to be provided on topics of sexual misconduct, sexual abuse in the church and its impacts.

41. During these first years of experience at the Redemptorist Postulant House, students can go to school majoring in Philosophy at the University of Dallas, Irving, TX. Those whose English language needs to be improved can go to Northlake Community College to study more English and take general requirements courses which are transferable to University of Dallas.

42. For those who have completed B.A. or B.S. in non-philosophy majors, they are to enter the pre-theology program in which the following courses in philosophy and theology are required:

Philosophy:

Logic
Philosophy and Ethical Life
Philosophy of Man
Philosophy of Being (Metaphysics)
Recent Philosophy
Epistemology
Ethics
Philosophy of God

Theology:

Understanding the Bible
Western Theo. Tradition
Systematic Theology
Moral Theology

Recommended Language:

Spanish or classical lang.

43. The house jobs are created to help improve the students' personal responsibility for the life of the community. Students are collectively and individually accountable for the tasks assigned to each. Neatness and order in the house have to be maintained daily, common as well as personal rooms. Personal rooms need to be clean and organized as if they can be ready for a guest room. Personal room condition reflects his education level. The smaller and less sufficient the room is, the neater and cleaner it has to be preserved. Cleanness – organization – order should be a rule for each student.

Students will have to vote for a “Capo” among themselves who will be representing the students and coordinating general activities in his six-month term. It is he in role of leadership who will assign each student house-job(s). Each student will be given different tasks in order to learn the significant as well as insignificant jobs. He should take his assignment with humility and responsibility. Every rotation in job assignments has to be approved by the academic superior. The Capo and his assistant are accountable for clearly defining the jobs. We should practice the Gospel spirit in our daily tasks: *“Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of inheritance”* (Col. 3:23-24).

44. Besides academic and community life, attention is paid particularly to their spiritual growth. Thus, all is required to fully and actively participate in all common liturgy and develop their own personal prayer times. To help and monitor their spiritual development, each student is to meet with the Prefect once a month for the evaluation and assessment of their progress. Also, the Secretariat of Formation has its own evaluation of each student, upon which the Vice-Provincial Council bases its decision for admitting him into the novitiate, renewal of temporal vows, perpetual profession, or holy orders. All files

about students are to be kept confidentially and to be sent to the Vice-Provincial Council after their formation years in the Studentate.

45. The students will also have an opportunity to do pastoral ministry at a Redemptorist-run parish. After getting in tune with the community life and settled in spiritual life for about 1 to 2 years since the day of his entry, each student is expected to do pastoral work in teaching Catechism and helping young people in the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement. The time range will be determined by the Prefect.

Other students will have to develop their pastoral skills and improve their sensitivity for the poor by engaging in different types of ministries, such as visiting nursing homes, helping out at soup-kitchen, encountering young people in different conferences, fundraising for the poor, etc. These activities are to be done together as a community and under the supervision of their Prefect.

C. PRE-NOVITIATE

46. After an adequate time, students with positive signs of growth and maturity are called to enter the pre-novitiate program. However, all said activities above are still applied to the pre-novitiate candidates. In addition, these students are expected to achieve higher level of maturity as they reach higher level of formation program. To be more practical, a special weekly session should be given to those candidates to help them understand more about themselves, about the Church, about the traditions and charisms of the Congregation, and particularly about how to be true Redemptorist missionaries.

47. The time frame for pre-novitiate program lasts from 1 to 2 years, or otherwise determined by the Formation Secretariat. During the last 6 months prior to officially entering the novitiate, formation helps students focus especially on prayer and spiritual life.

D. NOVITIATE

48. The general objective of the novitiate is already set out by the Church in the Canon Law:

“The novitiate, by which life in the institute begins, is ordered to this, that the novices better recognize their divine vocation and on which is, moreover, proper to the institute, that they experience the institute’s manner of living, that they be formed in mind and heart by its spirit, and that their intention and suitability be tested” (no. 646).

49. The novitiate is a time for the novice to grow in his knowledge and acceptance of himself, his family and his culture. Especially, with the help of his novice master, he is to better discern the work of God in his life.

50. A full medical examination by certified professionals is to be done prior to entering the novitiate in order to help the candidates to have full awareness of himself as a whole person, especially concerning his sexuality and affectivity, with the vision of living to the full his own celibate life.

51. What should stand out in the novitiate formation is the spiritual dimension. The novice master closely accompanies each novice in his process of discernment and his spiritual journey. With the grace of God, the novice’s absolute Novice Master, the novice is to acquire the habit of personal and communal prayer, advance in his knowledge and appreciation of Redemptorist spirituality and history, as well as that of the Catholic Church. Above all, as future *“apostles of conversion”* (C. 11), each novice is to develop a strong sense of what it means to have constant conversion.

52. The schedule of the novitiate is to be set up in such a way that helps each novice truly experience the richness of a Redemptorist community life. By the fraternal bond between and a genuine brotherhood among novices, the candidates constantly grow in his love for and desire to work with the Church.

53. Canon law of the Church states clearly that the novitiate is not a time for formal academic studies (no. 652). Thus, courses within the novitiate are only those that help the novices grow in their understanding of the Church's theology of consecrated life, the meaning of Redemption, the Congregation's *Constitutions and General Statutes*, its history and traditions, the history and work of the Vice-Province, etc.

54. With concern for pastoral dimension, the novice master will determine what type of ministry should be given to the candidates.

55. All candidates in the Vice-Province are to complete this one-year novitiate in Baldwin Park, California. Upon completion, and with approval from the Vice-Provincial Council after consulting with the novice master and the Formation Secretariat, they make their first profession of vows becoming official members of the Redemptorist family and consecrated persons of the Church. Prior to making their first vows, the candidates must have demonstrated an ardent love of Christ, a solid life of prayer, a strong conviction about their vocation to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and a firm knowledge of the implications of the three vows and the ability to live them out in the Redemptorist community.

E. FIRST TO PERPETUAL VOWS

56. After making their first vows, the professed members are being sent to the professed formation house, Houston, TX, where they will enter the theologate program at St. Mary's Seminary, or will continue to finish their philosophy if this has not yet been done.

57. As professed religious in the formation program, they are to continue to grow and to mature in every aspect of life, particularly in his commitment to Christ in the apostolic life of the Congregation. Thus, this formation period should provide "personalized accompaniment such as will help the candidate to integrate his systematic studies into his life, his apostolic experiences into the life of the religious community, and integrate all of this in a consecration of himself to Christ the Redeemer" (2003 *Ratio Formationis*, n. 96).

58. By this time, the newly professed religious should have become more convinced of their own vocation and their suitability for future apostolate. It should be more particularly true of the solid human maturity. However, should any serious and 'insoluble' problems of human growth arise, the candidates "should be told in good time, so that they can withdraw from our life, and with full awareness of their Christian vocation, be helped to enter readily on the apostolate of the laity" (2003 *RF*, n.97).

59. A solid and consistent schedule built on the foundation of spirituality should be formed. What has been said about spiritual dimension in earlier stages of formation is also true of this period. In other words, frequent spiritual direction and reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be maintained and fostered. In addition, during this last stage of initial formation, students should deepen their love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the Church, and grow in their knowledge and appreciation of the Alphonsian charisma.

60. Such appreciation will have to lead to one's strong sense of belonging to a community. In other words, the communal aspect of formation during this period must strive to deepen the person's love and appreciation for the mystery of community life as a "prophetic and liberating proclamation of the Good

News” (*Comm 11*, 1988, n.51). All activities should be done to create a true and genuine bond between the members, so that they can be better prepared to work together as a family.

61. As mentioned, all members must meet the standard academic requirements set out by the Church and the local Episcopal conference. In other words, students must complete their undergraduate degrees and attain a Master of Divinity degree. For those students in the Brotherhood vocation, they are not required to meet such standards in academic studies. However, they are advised to attain a certain level of intellectual knowledge, so that their future mission may bear much fruits. Besides certain courses in philosophy and theology, each brother is also suggested to pursue a degree in a special field, depending on his desire and ability.

62. Students during their first and second year of theology are asked to engage in several pastoral works, including serving the poor in charitable organizations and teaching CCD in parishes. After finishing the second year of theology, they are to participate in the CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) Program at a designated hospital for a whole summer. After that, they might be given a whole year of doing pastoral work, encountering the poor and their culture in a third-world country. The Vice-Provincial Council and the Formation Secretariat will determine such selection for the safety of each student. Besides, while at home, they are also encouraged to coordinate and direct retreats for the youths and various organizations when time is permitted. They will also be given opportunities to get familiarized with the pastoral works of the Vice-Province, especially in the field of media.

63. Final vows can only be made when the candidates have shown clear signs of maturity in at least the five so-called ‘pillars’ of formation. All norms and guidelines in the *Constitutions and General Statutes* concerning the conditions prior to making final vows are to be observed.

F. TRANSITION TO PASTORAL MINISTRY

64. Normally, and after having met all the requirements set forth by the Church, the Congregation and the Vice-Province, candidates are to be ordained to the diaconate in the first semester of their last year in theology. At this time, the newly ordained deacons, while continuing to finish their theological studies, begin to engage in practical pastoral ministries, especially in their roles as preachers of the Word. Most of these ministries can be done right at their Redemptorist formation houses, especially the one in Houston, where Masses and retreats are regularly held. Other ministries are to be determined by the Formation Secretariat, with the input of the candidates themselves.

65. Upon completion of theological studies, a transitional deacon formally leaves the community of initial formation and enters into full participation in the life and apostolate of the Vice-Province. Thus, he is under the supervision of the house superior, and guided by a well-balanced mentor who accompanies him on his new journey of life.

66. It is up to the Vice-Provincial Council to decide where the deacon should go and serve. Upon the recommendation from the General Government and with the spirit of the XXIII General Chapter, he will be given opportunities to live with and among the poor who is the primary object of his future mission. At the same time, he is strongly encouraged to study their culture and language, especially Spanish, in order to widen the horizons of ministry and open up new potentials in serving the poor more effectively. Thus, a six-month experience of ministry is required before being ordained to the priesthood.

67. The candidate is to be sent to a well established Redemptorist community, either in the Vice-Province or in other Units, where he can fully experience the reality of pastoral life within the community context. The Vice-Provincial Council will continue to explore more options for the confreres during this important transitional period, especially those that involve in missionary activities that other

Redemptorist Units already established. Collaboration with other Units in or out of region is always highly valued and encouraged.

G. ONGOING FORMATION

68. Formation does not end when a confrere leaves the formation house and engages in pastoral ministry. Rather, it is only the beginning of a new journey. Formation is a lifetime commitment and development. The Redemptorist's spirit of missionary and creative enthusiasm would gradually be weakened and at stake when ongoing formation is not taken seriously.

After the initial formation, a confrere enters into full participation in the apostolate. He now encounters a new reality of concrete daily life, which may cause disillusionments. Experience has shown that this period can be exceptionally difficult in his life. He does not have the support structures in the formation community any more.

The ongoing formation programs, mainly in the form of workshops, are designed to consolidate sense of community and co-responsibility. It should help him to grow in leadership as well as collaboration, to know his own talents and limitations, to cultivate a desire to prepare his homilies and catechetical presentations, and to work in mass media area. Other well-balanced confreres are designated as mentors in these programs.

69. Thus, it is the object of ongoing formation to "keep alive a continual awareness among the confreres of the need for ongoing formation through the whole of their lives and to encourage them to use times set apart for renewing themselves and their ability to creatively meet the challenges of both personal growth and Redemptorist Apostolic Life" (2003 R.F., n. 110).

70. Confreres are to be reminded of the need for an ever growing maturity on the human level. They are to be aware of their stages in life: first several years of active ministry, the following 'middle years', and retirement age. Ongoing formation should help them to accept in a constructive way each stage of life as opportunity for constant growth. No less attention should be paid to one's maintenance of physical health.

71. Each and every confrere is expected to have monthly days of recollection and attend the Vice-Provincial Annual Retreat. These times will serve as opportunities for all to reflect on their own personal life, to enrich their pastoral ministry, and especially to deepen their love for Christ and His mission. If, for a legitimate reason, a confrere cannot attend these days, then he is required to makeup another time by himself. True happiness comes from what one 'is' than from what one 'does'.

72. To avoid 'each one is an island', and in the spirit of our Third Vice-Provincial Chapter, each confrere should be working within the context of a community (4.5). It is important to create "a community of co-responsible persons united in solidarity with one another and with the larger Redemptorist Community of the (V)Province and of the whole world" (2003 RF, n. 113).

73. Each confrere is encouraged to update their intellectual knowledge by attending special workshops that pertain to the needs of pastoral ministry, of the Vice-Province, and of their own. Of these workshops and sessions, special attention should be paid to the study of Bible and theology, of the Church's teachings, of the present culture and psychology, of special field, and of foreign language. It is particularly important that those in charge of formation and mass media should be continually trained and updated in order to perform their duties more effectively. It is the responsibility of the Vice-Provincial Council to decide whom to be sent for higher studies, for the good of the Vice-Province, of the Congregation and of the whole Church.

74. Redemptorist “cannot allow themselves to settle down in surroundings and structures in which their work would no longer be missionary” (C. 15). Therefore, it is the responsibility of each confrere and of the whole community to be sensitive to the pastoral needs and always ready to creatively seek new means to meet those needs. The pastoral zeal and creativity of St. Alphonsus should be a model for all to imitate.

V. SIDE MATTERS

A. FINANCIAL

75. The spirit of poverty and of simplicity should always be the lifestyle of each and every member of the Vice-Province. This spirit of poverty is to be practiced in the everyday life, whether in eating or drinking, in dressing or in transportations; likewise the spirit of simplicity is to be practiced as such. By doing so, they become witnesses for the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Of the financial matter, we should differentiate which principles are applied for community and/or for individual. The general principle is: try to live our daily life according to the spirit of the Gospel.

A) For the candidates and postulants, since they have not taken their vows, they are encouraged, but not obligated, to keep the rules which are set for the professed. They are allowed to keep their own possessions.

For the sake of learning the spirit of poverty, they are required to contribute to the local community a small amount of \$200 dollars a month as a living expense, continuously for the first six months since the day of their entrance. This amount of money may be flexible depending on each individual case, following the consideration and approval of the Secretariat for Formation. With regard to their tuition, students and their families are asked to bear the responsibility; they may apply for any kind of financial aid which is available to most of colleges and universities. Nevertheless, the Vice-Province takes every effort in supporting the candidates so that the financial matter may not be an obstacle to their vocation.

B) For the professed students, all norms and regulations in the *Constitutions and General Statutes*, and in the *Vice-Provincial Norms* are to be strictly kept. For the moment their monthly allowance from the treasurer is \$50 U.S. dollars. Should there be any further need, they can ask the treasurer for more, with the consent of the prefect. The general principle is that all should be practicing the spirit of poverty like those in the first Christian community (Acts 2:44).

B. DRESS CODE

76. Being aware of their identity as religious or would-be religious some day, students must know how to dress modestly but decently. The rule of thumb is: proper attire must fit proper time. Therefore, professed students are required to wear the Redemptorist habit for morning liturgy, which includes Mass, and on some special occasions. The non-professed are to wear neat clothes. Generally speaking, except for exercise and working times, students are to dress decently in the house.

C. RELATIONSHIPS

77. Students should keep an intimate relationship with their own families and with their friends. However, they should avoid any kind of unnecessary, if not unhealthy, “spiritual sister-brother”

relationship. The main relation students should build up in their formation years is a deep and intimate relationship with God and with the community.

To foster the relationship with their family, candidates are encouraged to write to their families regularly and phone them when necessary or on special occasions. In both cases, self-control is always desired. No cell phone is allowed during the formation years. To better maintain inner peace and achieve academic successes, long and unnecessary phone calls are to be avoided at all times.

D. LEAVING THE HOUSE

78. Students leave the house only when needed and with the approval from the prefect. Students should avoid habituating themselves with going out whenever opportunities arise. When they have to leave, students should plan carefully so that multi-tasks can be done at the same time. In so doing, students learn how to manage time and set priority of works so that their academic life may not be harmed. Five general principles are to be considered when leaving the house: *careful planning, asking for permission, informing the kitchen for missing meal(s), visiting the Chapel, and returning on time.*

VI. CONCLUSION

79. This ratio for formation offers some directions and practical guidelines for the life of the students in the Extra Patriam Vice-Province. Life keeps going. And these guidelines are of relativity to temporariness. The basic is *living out the spirit of a true Redemptorist missionary for the sake of plentiful redemption.* Life will show us what stipulations should be kept and what should be dropped.

80. Lastly, the words of our Former Superior General, Father Lasso de la Vega, should catch our attention and deserve deep reflection, both as formators and as students: “Formation is not an end in itself. It is oriented towards the growth of the person to make a conscious option for Christ and to be a permanent witness of his presence and activity in the world” (*Letter to Formators in 1995*, 4.1) At the end, it is not the human formators who train and form each religious, but Christ Himself is the main Formator who molds each one by the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the will of the Eternal Father. He alone is both the Teacher and Object of our consecrated missionary life.