



The History of Passionist Formation

Dear Brethren,

We are gathered in this place which is a holy place for us. It made holy by the presences of our Holy Founder, Saint Paul of the Cross, and other Saints, Blessed's, Venerable's, Servants of God, and distinguished brethren who have lived in this Generalate Community, or who have simply passed through on occasion. We have come together for this very important international meeting of formation personnel (Masters of Novices and Student Directors), now getting underway with these conferences of a historical nature which we members of the Historical Commission will deliver during the next two days.

As you can tell from the title of this presentation, we are beginning with a temporal perspective, we shall examine some aspects of our particular formation process. There will be a brief introduction, followed by an analysis of the different formation stages, beginning with the minor seminary, then the novitiate, student life, intellectual formation, and concluding with a look at formation of our Brothers.

Saint Paul of the Cross, from the very beginning, was always attentive to the formation of his sons. Each religious in the community was supposed to give witness to an evangelical life under two aspects: the glory given to God, and the sanctification of his neighbor. He was charged with giving this witness so that his community could render a positive image of the Congregation, and thus be attractive to the young men who were in vocational discernment. Saint Paul of the Cross wished for Passionists to be holy in body and in spirit; he wanted them to be living images of Jesus Crucified, recognizable wherever they go by the perfumed air of Christ, in such a way that their lives are an ongoing mission preaching, and an encouragement to others to join them.

On March 23, 1752, he wrote to the Passionists at Terracina: «Who can say how many persons will fall in love with serving the Lord, how many hearts will be inspired, when they see in this Holy Retreat such modesty, such silence, such recollection...»¹. To be such a community also meant that the community was alive and life-giving; that it would be able to attract the hearts of many young men, leading them to undertake the narrow path of the Gospel, especially the Gospel of the Passion. Thus, it would be necessary to choose candidates, guide their discernment of their vocations, and lead them along a formative process which would enable them to enter into the *modus vivendi* of the Congregation. St. Paul was convinced that only when young men whose vocations were clear, sure, and based on balanced human and spiritual attitudes, would the Congregation be able to expect the incarnation of the Congregation's spirituality in them, and their developing into the specific apostolate to which the Congregation was called.

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S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Lettere ai Passionisti*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma, CIPI, 1998, 797.



First of all, we must make clear that from the start, the Founder did not wish there to be a distinction between the spiritual formation of the clerics and that of the Brothers. He says so even in the Rule: the Passionist vocation is one, what unites the Religious is the vows they profess, not the diversity of ministries carried out on the basis of their personal abilities.

St. Paul, with a paternal affection, kept the welfare of the students foremost in mind. On their behalf we allowed some easing of the common life, whether at table, or in the observance. He added a breakfast dish, and eliminated their getting up at night. By these provisions, he wanted to better dispose the young religious for their studies. In fact, he always had a high esteem for the cultural education of the religious (biblical, theological, moral).

First of all, we should make clear what were the essential points which should always exist in the Passionist formation. Here is what Fabiano Giorgini wrote in the introduction to the first volume of the series, “Studies in Passionist History and Spirituality,” which is entitled “The Congregation of the Passion, what it is and to what it aspires.”

«1. The only source of the Congregation is God.

It is with an unmistakable clarity and in many places that St. Paul refers to the foundation of the Congregation as due only to the mercy of God, whose compassion for a world immersed in sin because it has forgotten the love of God manifest in so realistic a manner as in the Passion of His Son, Jesus. Using this new Congregation, God wishes this world to reclaim the “memory,” the “remembrance” of the Passion of Jesus, “of those who, drawn to its loving invitation, cannot resist, no matter how hard their hearts.” Since it is God who is the author of the Congregation, it can look forward to fruitfully develop and work within the Church.

2. The only reason that the Congregation is born in the Church is to promote the life-giving “memory” of the Passion of Jesus among the people of God.

This is the “raison d’être” for the Congregation, and is the basis for Paul’s seeking the approval of the Pope and his desire to have members who are adequate for this purpose. At the beginning of his two “Notizie [Summaries]” and throughout their texts, St. Paul quite naturally and insistently makes this point. He mentions the vows taken specifically to use all means to place in the hearts and souls of persons “a continual remembrance of the Crucifix” and that it is this apostolic effort which characterizes the Congregation and assures not only “miraculous conversions of sinners,” but will stimulate the desire for Christian perfection in many people, even those with little education.

3. The life of the Passionist Religious is likened to that of the Apostles.

They are true evangelistic laborers, and apostolic ministers, who nourish their lives with the instructions which Jesus gave to the disciples and apostles before he went them out on mission. From this awareness that he continues the life of the apostles, the Passionist derives the urgent conviction that he must follow Christ in poverty and in solitude, that he “goes out from” and “returns to” a solitude at the feet of Jesus Crucified, “our one and only good.” . There he learns to better understand the love of God, he allows himself to be transfixed by that love, and he becomes better able to take to heart the encounter of the people with Christ. He applies himself to his ministries with all appropriate means that answer to a “well-ordered charity,” without forgetting that



there are some demons which are not driven out except through prayer and fasting (meditation on the Passion of Jesus).

4. The religious, united in a profound fraternal charity, live joyful and peaceful lives.

Saint Paul emphasizes the reasonableness of the Passionist life, which may appear to be, and is, an austere life. Discretion allows for the strong and the weak to live and love the penitential life of the Congregation with joy and perseverance. “Because our quality of life is so satisfying to the members of this poor Congregation, the Superiors should be very vigilant” to moderate anyone’s fervor. In fact, he will say “having removed by all means possible means what can impede a perfect fraternal charity...it will resemble a paradise on earth for its peace, harmony, stillness, unity; not unlike that in which the first Christians lived. This nascent Congregation renews that first Christian fervor.”

5. The Passionist Religious help the Church through their specific mission.

The efficacious contribution which Passionists offer to the Church is to continue the life of the Apostles through their contemplative-apostolic life, which is solidly centered on the memory of the Passion of Jesus. It is this awareness and conviction that the Passionists are making a distinctly effective contribution in the Church that permeates these *notizie*, as well as the other letters of Saint Paul of the Cross. This is the source of Paul's strength in facing the labors and the uncertainties presented by the development of the Institute, and in carrying out apostolic works in that social and religious climate. “The religious, having put aside temporal matters, with hearts filled with the love of God, can undertake great things for the glory of God and for the defense of the Holy Church, even at the cost of their own lives.”

6. The religious shall be prepared with a well-rounded education for their apostolic duties.

Theirs shall be a serious preparation, carried out before their priestly ordination in appropriate retreats, and which should continue to a lesser degree throughout their lives. A recognition of “such a privileged ministry” which is itinerant apostolic preaching, and the seeking of more opportune means to announce the wisdom of the cross, call for such study, which, together with prayer and penitential poverty, fashion the “apostolic worker [*l’operaio apostolico*]”².

The Apostolic School or Minor Seminary

For the first 110 years, one entered the Congregation directly through the year's novitiate, without a previous stage. Nevertheless, the Congregation, following the example of other religious orders, chose to admit to the clerical novitiate only those young men who had already adequately

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PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *La Congregazione della passione di Gesù cos'è e cosa vuole*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 1, Roma, Curia Generale, 1978, 3-5.



completed the “humanities and rhetoric” courses (today’s secondary education), so that upon completing their novitiate, they would have a sufficient foundation to begin their philosophical studies.

According to the practice of the time, reinforced by the pontifical decree *Etsi decretis* (March 16, 1675), adolescent boys were not admitted into monasteries and religious orders for their secondary education in preparation for entry into the novitiate. Those studies, therefore, had to be fulfilled, ordinarily, prior to entry into the religious institute. The Passionist Congregation, in accord with this practice, organized only the study of philosophy, theology, and pastoral ministries. The candidates had to have already completed courses in grammar and rhetoric, i.e., their native language, Latin (with written exercises), mathematics and history prior to their entering the novitiate.

After 1830, a number of young men experienced difficulty to become clerics because, prior to their entry into the Congregation, they had not completed the necessary pre-admission studies, whether on account of the lack of adequate schools in the vicinity of their homes, or because of the poverty of the family.

A remedy was proposed by the introduction in the Provinces, and following the novitiate, “a brief period of study” to advance the young professed in the essential fundamental courses prior to philosophy, and because the texts used in philosophy were in Latin.

The General Chapter of 1845 (Decree 369,4) assigned the responsibility for this supplemental study to the Provincials (at that time there were only two Provinces, Presentation and Addolorata—Naples, both having been established in 1769). In 1851 a further decree (Decree 377,3) stipulated that this humanities program should not last less than a full year. The problem was felt by Fr. Dominic Barberi, in Ashton, England. In 1844, he had accepted some postulants, with the consent of the General, in order to teach them, among other things, Latin.³

The growing need to help young boys in the maturation of their vocations while they were in a social environment which became always more complex, and often enough, hostile to the Church, fostered the eventual decision to create a minor seminary, called an “alunnato”. In the meanwhile, the 1878 General Chapter (Decree 439) authorized the Provinces to organize a postulancy, even for a year prior to the novitiate so that there be a greater certainty about the vocation of the young men, and to prepare them, even academically. Out of that postulancy gradually developed the preparatory schools [l’alunnato] that Fr. General, Bernardo Silvestrelli, so assiduously promoted. These preparatory apostolic schools (or “alunnati”) developed: in France, as a project of the Provincial, Fr. Michele Cardella (1878)⁴; in Dublin (1879)⁵; at the St. Joseph Retreat on Monte Argentario (1880),

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MENEGAZZO F., *P. Domenico*, Isola del Liri (FR), Ed. Pisani, 1963, 321-322.

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Cenni necrologici 1916, 16; DOUDIER M., *Les Passionistes en France*, Clamart, Presses Jurassiennes à Dole, 1977, 17.

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where it was dependent on Fr. Generale Silvestrelli who maintained it⁶; and in Mexico (1882)⁷. In general, one stayed in the preparatory school for two years.

The General Chapter of 1890 encouraged all of the Provinces to open preparatory seminaries, and gave some guidelines for them:

1. to accept young boys at 13 years of age;
2. to have them in the seminary no more than two years;
3. that the families share, if able, in the expenses of maintaining the boys;
4. to draft a book of regulations to be approved by the General with his Council (Decree 488).

Some Provinces, however, waited until the first decade of the 20th century to open a preparatory seminary⁸. The General Chapters of 1914 and 1946 (Decrees 589; 710) again record the requirement that a book of regulations for the seminary be submitted to the Superior General for approval by himself with his Council.

anno	alumni	professi	novizi
1914	291	1663	121
1920	278	1508	138

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Cenni necrologici 1883, 19. *Annals 1879*, March 1, fu aperto in Mount Argus.

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AGCP, Cronaca Praes 1863-1944, f. 70 (datt.).

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GIORGINI F., *Le Suore Passioniste Messicane. 1) I Passionisti nel Messico, 2) La Congr. Figlie della passione e di Maria SS. Addolorata*, in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 30, Roma, Curia Generale, 1983, 12.

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Un buon lavoro sull'alunnato di Gabiria della Provincia CORI mostra la perseveranza degli alunni verso il noviziato e la Professione. OSÉS FELIPE D., *El Colegio Apostólico de Gabiria (1910-1967)*, Urretxu (Guipúzcoa) 1990; per la perseveranza vedere p. 55-57, 66-67. Altro studio ben fatto sulla perseveranza e abbandono riguarda la Provincia Fam.: PEREDA C., DE PRADA M. A., GARCÍA-LONGORIA I., *El Colegio-seminario de Zuera y la Problemática vocacional de la Provincia de la Sagrada Familia. Informe sociológico*, Madrid 1984.

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1921	486	1780	106
1922	569	1822	144
1923	603	1878	158
1928	913	2281	182
1934	1010	2779	227
1938	920	3001	206
1945	1033	3219	166
1950	1543	3394	198
1955	1872	3617	180
1962	2611	3960	196
1970	1746	3716	55
1975	1712	3177	62 ⁹ .

The *Ratio Studiorum* 1959 (66-67,69), did not make the preparatory seminary obligatory [for the Provinces], but it gave good reasons for recommending that they be built where considered necessary, and for how they should function. The development of the preparatory seminary, requiring great economic efforts and dedication of personnel by the Provinces, reached its greatest expansion approximately between 1950 and 1970.

The statistical chart shows how the number of seminarians began to decline after 1965, until it finally disappears entirely at the beginning of the 1980's. From the chart, we notice that the number of novices did not correspond to the number of seminarians, something that should be studied more deeply in the future. What was the basis of the decision taken regarding the choice of those seminarians who would be considered fit for continuing their formation?

In the Provinces, in the place of minor seminaries, toward the end of the 1960's, we saw the beginnings of *discernment communities*, in which were admitted those young men who, having had some experience of us, expressed a serious interest in the Passionist vocation, but who needed to mature that interest, while they completed the necessary studies. The Constitutions of 1984 recommended that we “seriously undertake the promotion of the Passionist vocation,” helping the

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AGCP, fondo Capitoli Gen; Cap. Gen. 1914; 1920; *Acta Congregationis*, vol. III, 347; vol. IV, 339; Vol. V, 348; Vol. X, 190; vol. XII, 491; vol. XIV, 78; XV, 296; vol. XVII, 93; vol. XIX, 455; vol. XXII, 277; vol. XXIV, 157; vol. XXV, 336; vol. XXVII, 104; Relatio annua 1975.



candidates to mature their response “by means of seminaries or other means considered more efficacious and opportune” (n. 87).

In the last thirty years, much has been accomplished in the area of vocational promotion. Generally, today, formation begins with a minimum of a year of vocational sessions, followed by the two years of novitiate.

Formation in the Novitiate

St Paul of the Cross considered the year of novitiate a fundamental period in formation. In the two redactions of the Rule (1741 and 1746), the chapter on the Novitiate was completely rewritten. Paul always wanted the the office of Master of Novices be filled by the most qualified persons he knew: religious who were skilled in spiritual, doctrinal and psychological competencies, so that they could instill calm serenity in the young men who would then be better disposed to open their souls to their Novice Master. In this regard, we remember the first three Novice Masters in our history. The first was Fr. Fulgenzio Pastorelli, who was Master from 1741 to June 1746, and then from December 1747 to his premature death on April 6, 1755. He had a great influence on his religious in formation, whom he sought to infuse with a love for their vocation, a respect for the Rule, and zeal to promote the memory of the Passion of Jesus. The second was Marcoaurelio Pastorelli, from June 1746 to December 1747. He was the Master of Novices for the interval that Fr. Fulgenzio was recovering from illness. The third Master was Giammaria Cioni, from the time of Fr. Fulgenzio's death, 1755, to 1759. Thus came into being a true and proper school of Passionist Spirituality, whose responsibility and duty was the formation of the religious in a double aspect: the interior life and the apostolate, the two poles of the Passionist vocation. As long as Saint Paul lived, the naming of the Mater of Novices was reserved to the Superior General and his Council; after 1775, it was reserved to the Provincial Chapter. In either case, it was the duty of an elevated legislative power, in order to highlight the importance and the sensitivity of this service in formation.

The Master, apart from a solid spirituality, should continue to study such fields as ascetical and moral theology, and spiritual direction. He ought to especially shine by the example of his life, because formation is achieved more by example than by words.

“The novitiate is instituted to bring about new men, and the completion of the novitiate will point out those who will become the successor religious”, so wrote Saint Paul to the Master of Novices Fr. Pietro Vico (October 24, 1764)¹⁰. “To become new men” meant two things in particular to Paul:

1. to take seriously the meaning of mystical death by an interior detachment from all things and persons, beginning with himself and his self-will;

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S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Lettere ai Passionisti*, vol. I, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma, CIPI, 1998, 590.



2. to achieve both in will and in practice, a humility of heart, the will to serve, and a radical detachment from oneself in order to be, in Christ, absolutely God's alone.

Through these virtues, sought after and practiced, one could enter into a “continual interior recollection,” which made the novices a “man of prayer,” and then an “apostolic man,” who would successfully teach the people to keep the memory of the salvific love of God, revealed and communicated in the Passion of Jesus¹¹.

Formation in mental prayer was emphasized through appropriate instruction, and was summarized in a manuscript presenting the methodology of meditation. This summary was given to the novices as an appendix to the Regulations. The regular gathering in “chapter” was an opportunity for the novices to offer and share their experience in prayer, and it offered the Master the opportunity of evaluating the progress being made by the novices, and to help them with appropriate suggestions. The weekly conference of the novice with the Master was largely about prayer: its difficulties, the fruit to be achieved, the influence it should have on daily recollection, and how it should help one to live out the theological virtues.

A meditative reading of the New Testament, whether to exercise the memory (every day one had to memorize a certain number of verses in Latin), or in order to develop one's knowledge of Latin, offered an opportunity to grow in the understanding of Jesus, to grow in the desire to follow him, and to share in his experience. Christ crucified was always presented in such a way that the disciple was focused on him, in order to profess the specific vow of the Passion as a means to embrace and grasp the saving love of the heavenly Father as manifested in the Passion of Jesus.

It was emphasized to the novice that he ought to be formed in order to live in fraternal communion with others who were called by the same Christ, so that together they might manifest the truth of the reconciliation which he had infused in their hearts and which they should manifest by allowing themselves to be loved. Those young men who were not evidencing sufficient joy, peace and a collaborative spirit in fraternal living in community were dismissed. Such an attitude was detrimental, and was not to be compromised, because it was a pillar for future Passionist Life, which the young man intended to embrace.

The external structures of the novitiate, for example, the separation of the novitiate community from the professed, was a function of canon law. Our Founder wanted to build, on Monte Argentario, the St Joseph Retreat for only the novices. He wanted them to have a more healthy environment than was possible at the Presentation (although both on the same Monte Argentario), because Presentation overlooked the laguna of Orbetello, which at that time was not yet reclaimed. It was a breeding ground for mosquitoes, and thus harbored malaria. He also wanted to accustom them to a greater solitude, giving them a “desert experience” (as we would say today), both

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Regola capo 8; S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Lettere ai Passionisti*, vol. I, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma, CIPI, 1998, 283.



interiorly and externally, so that they could more deeply arrive at that psychological liberty which opens the door to the profound experience of being reborn in Christ, into a divine life. They would become “new”, as is suggested by the word given to this period.

In order to support recollection throughout the day, the practice was introduced of reciting the “monk’s alphabet,” and a series of ejaculations¹². At recreation, Fr. Marcoaurelio introduced the practice, known among other institutes as well, of recalling the “presence of God.” When the one responsible would call out “Presence of God,” all would be silent, and adore the presence of God in their midst; then, when the same person said “Praised be Jesus and Mary,” all would respond “May they always be praised.” Recreation would then resume. It was a way for the novice to keep his heart continually in communion with God, no matter what the daily activities were for him.

A special care was shown to keeping up the novices' mental health, avoiding scruples, undue efforts to remain recollected or to vanquish temptations. They were to keep up their physical health by eating what the community put before them, and by taking the rest and sleep provided for in the Rule. The novitiate was certainly an ascetical undertaking, but marked by equilibrium and humane restraint, as we would say today. Our Founder wrote to the Master of Novices, Fr. Pietro:

«Be very vigilant...: 1) they are not to be fixated, but do everything with a quiet mind and without any straining of the head or chest; 2) ...they are never to give way to scruples and other sadness...which normally attack novices, especially in the beginning; 3) ...they are not to get fixated and force their heads in order to stay recollected in the presence of God, but from time to time make ejaculatory prayers and gentle affections...gently»¹³.

Throughout the 1800's, the practice of experienced superiors was to not hasten in sending a young man to the novitiate once he was seen to have the desired characteristics. He would be asked to remain for two or three months at home, which proved to be helpful for reaching a better vocational discernment. This was especially true for those young men who asked for admittance during a parish mission ¹⁴. It was strongly declared that to become a Passionist meant to become a

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L'Alfabeto monastico sembra risalire a Tommaso da Kempis. Con ogni lettera dell'alfabeto si indica un ammonimento ascetico. Per *giaculatoria* si intende una frase con cui si invoca il Signore o ci si raccomanda a lui.

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S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Lettere ai Passionisti*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma, CIPI, 1998, 588, a P. Pietro Vico 24/10/1764. [English: St. Paul of the Cross, *The Letters of St. Paul of the Cross* (trans. Roger Mercurio, Frederick Sucher), vol. III, Hyde Park NY, New City Press, 2000.]

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follower of Jesus, who was crucified for love of us. To be a Passionist meant to accompany him in his Passion. Once in the novitiate, the young man was exempt for three days, at least, from rising for Matins; he was given an extra bit of bread at breakfast (il crostino), he was accompanied during the daily walk in the garden so that he could, gradually, become used to his new environment.¹⁵

He was to become convinced that as a Passionist, as part of the Passionist vocation, he was to live immersed in the love of God revealed in a special way through the incarnation of the Word and through the Passion. The means to this transformation of self and one's interior life was prayer. Special care was to be paid to teaching the novice to meditate, and especially to live in intimate and continual union with God. In the novitiate regulations, there was an appendix dedicated to this topic: "An easy and practical instruction on how to meditate well." In it were summarized the instructions provided by the Master. The method was inspired by that of St. Ignatius (memory, intellect, and will), but with an emphasis on the affective response, and in the effort to practice a virtue, or to free oneself from a defect. Following the teaching of St Paul of the Cross, much attention was paid to helping the young man to understand that his vocation demands that he become a holocaust, consumed totally and exclusively with Christ Crucified, for God.

How would one be able to not only maintain, but further develop, his life of union with God once out of the novitiate and beginning the study of theology? The student was encouraged to continue ejaculatory prayers throughout the day, and to keep up the use of the Monk's Alphabet. Each recreation period, the novices and students, taking turns, recited one of the "letters" They were made to copy some pages from the book "A Very Easy Way of Being United with God." These pages contained a very brief synthesis of what was suggested by a very popular book of the time¹⁶. In this period, Fr. Bernardo della Vergine Addolorata drafted some recommendations for the clerics who were leaving the novitiate for further study, who were then required to copy the text for themselves: "I.X.P. Reminders for the clerics leaving the novitiate for further study."

This was followed by the recommendation of fidelity to a quarter hour of spiritual reading, a spiritual conference with the Director at least every two weeks, the weekly examen over one's own

Consuetudines Congr. SS. Crucis et Passionis D.N.J.C. Editio critica textuum PP. Dominici, Seraphim, Bernardi, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 2.4

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Ib., 4, con nota 4.

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Pratiche per mantenersi alla presenza di Dio e metodo di conversar con esso. Con un ritratto del perfetto Cristiano cavato dalle parole della S. Scrittura, ottava impressione e seconda romana, Lazzarini, Roma 1805. Uno dei due revisori di questa edizione fu il "P. Paolo Giacinto della SS. Trinità Passionista. Ex-Lettore di Sagra Teologia".

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progress, and dedicating for this purpose the feasts occurring when there would be neither school nor private study.

In order to foster recollection and mutual assistance in matters of the spirit, the young students were encouraged, during recreation or a walk, to be with the companion who had been assigned by the Master, or in the student house, by the Lector [professor]. The conversation of the young men should touch on spiritual matters, and occasionally even on their studies. The point of this methodology was to teach the young men how to get along with anyone, always with a patient courtesy.

Every three months, the professed community was convened to give their evaluation on the conduct of the novice, to determine whether he should continue or not. Until 1959, this evaluation was definitive-decisive; from that year to 1970, it was only consultative. In the present legislation there is no further mention of this evaluation because the law now gives each Province the faculty of determining which group should be consulted by the Provincial (Cost. 93).

In order to admit a novice to Profession, he was expected to show a verifiable progress in prayer and recollection; that he quietly fulfill his chores; that he has shown that his character is suitable for living in community in harmony with the others, and with a sense of belonging; and that he have “a firm will to advance, to his ability, to perfection according to the Constitutions” (Rule, #10). The Constitutions of 1984 repeat these conditions for admission and the expectations to which the novice is held in numbers 77, 82, 83, 89; which is substantially a repetition of what was given in the primitive norms.

Profession was perpetual at the start. During the second half of the 1800's, some uncertainties were noticed among the young, and some institutes began to ask the Holy See to allow the newly professed to make a temporary profession for a set time. The Passionists experienced the same apprehension. Thus, Fr. General Bernardo Silvestrelli wrote on March 12, 1899: «The situation of that Brother cook is truly sad, and it convinces me even more of what I have believed for some time, i.e., that our perpetual profession should be delayed for three or four years. Up to now, I have been opposed by others on this, but perhaps our younger generation will be convinced in spite of them»¹⁷.

The General Chapter of 1899 discussed the problem, and charged the General with his Council “to present a study regarding the profession of our novices to the Holy See.” This would take up the points of the discussion held during the Chapter discussion (Decree 527). The General Consulta of December 22, 1899, “having weighed the pros and cons, not just now, but other times as well,”

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AGCP, *Fondo Silvestrelli*, al P. Salvatore Freschi.



decided against making any innovation. The point was raised again in January, 1902, but with the same result¹⁸. Later, in 1911, the Holy See imposed a period of temporary profession before perpetual vows, and the General Chapter of 1914 established annual renewal of temporary vows for three years before final vows (Decrees 590,1; 612).

The profession of vows, a temporary profession, to be renewed annually for a minimum of three and a maximum of nine years, only after the Second Vatican Council, whose directives were included in the Chapter Document of 1970¹⁹.

While our Founder was alive, at the time that clerics were to receive major orders, under the title of “common table [mensa comune],” they were to make an “oath of perseverance” in the Congregation. At the General Chapters of 1778, 1784 and 1790 (Decrees 151; 185; 203), in order to “apply a remedy to human inconstancy,” it was decided that all religious should make the oath of perseverance and only then, under this guarantee of stability, would they be able to profess vows, which were, at that time, perpetual. In a change on the question, the General Chapter of 1914 decreed that the oath of perseverance would be made after the perpetual profession, and not before the first vows as had been the practice until then (Decree 590,2). The oath was then abolished at the time of the revision of the Rule in 1959 so that someone not sure that he could continue under vows, would not be constrained by the oath he had taken²⁰.

Between 1798 and 1814, religious institutes had twice been forced into suppression, the second of which, under Napoleon, was extreme. It dispersed the religious into the territories of their birth. This social environment had its effect on the professed, leaving them fearful of their future. For the young and for their families, likewise, there was a reluctance to embrace religious life. Until 1810,

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AGCP, *Consulte Generali*, I, f. 192, 203.

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Cf. *Documento Capitolare e Testi scelti dalle prime Regole*, Roma, CIPI, 1970, 49.

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Nella Provincia Corm dal 1886 al 1920 entrano come postulanti 351 giovani, vestono l'abito 295 e professano 193: CASSETTI A., *I Passionisti nell'Alta Italia*, Pianezza 1922, 307. In Provincia Cori dal 1910 al 1967 entrano 1663 alunni, vanno al noviziato 646, professano 496, OSÉS FELIPE D., *El Colegio Apostólico de Gabiria (1910-1967)*, Urretxu (Guipúzcoa) 1990, 68. Per la Provincia Mich statistiche: DOUDIER M., *Les Passionistes en France*, Clamart, Presses Jurassiennes à Dole, 1977, 38-41. Per la Provincia Paul vi è un buono studio di Fr. Luke Hay che dà le statistiche dei vestiti, degli usciti durante il noviziato, dei professi, e degli usciti dopo la Professione dal 1854 al 1978. *Personnel Statistics 1854 – December 1978*.



we had some professions each year, except for 1799 because of the closing of the novitiates in 1798. Nevertheless, in the first years of the 1800's, we can say that the arrival of candidates was moderate. The novitiates were re-opened as soon as the "Roman Republic" was ended, for all practical purposes in 1800. The re-appearance of Napoleon at the north of Italy, however, renewed fears that he would continue his march to central Italy. In October, the Superior General had the novitiate transferred to Corneto (Tarquinia). However, after twenty-two days, when the danger had passed, the novices returned to Monte Argentario²¹.

Another problem in the Novitiate of Monte Argentario arose the Tuscany Government wished to impede professions prior to the novices' twenty-first year. In order to circumvent the problem, the Superior General asked the Holy See to permit the profession of novices, «which the novitiate was entitled to do, but outside of Monte Argentario.»²². On December 8, 1804, Fr. General, Fr. Giuseppe Claris of Jesus Crucified, with the consent of the Council, opened a second novitiate at Sant'Angelo, Vetralla, "because of the fear of the pestilence which made safe passage through Monte Argentario impossible". Fr. Luigi of St. Anne was elected Master. The novitiate remained there until May 20, 1805, when, "any fear of contagion having passed, and with free access to Monte Argentario," the six novices (three clerics and 3 Brothers), along with their Master, Fr. Luigi of St. Anne, who was elected at the Provincial Chapter held on May 16, 1805, returned to the retreat of San Giuseppe²³. On November 3, 1806, Fr. General joined the novices of the Addolorata Province [Naples] to the Novitiate at San Giuseppe because of the earthquake which had occurred at Monte Cavo [Naples]²⁴.

21

AGCP fotocopia *Registro delle vestizioni 1785-1838*, f. 37.

22

AGCP, A, III-II/1-2, la concessione, del 02/06/1801, è edita in *Acta Congregationis*, vol. XIII, 216. Nel 1804 a causa della peste, apparsa in varie zone della Toscana, furono chiusi i confini e il Generale per facilitare gli aspiranti dello Stato pontificio, nel novembre 1804, aprì un secondo noviziato nel ritiro di Sant'Angelo: AGCP, fotocopia *Platea di S. Giuseppe*, 10; Lettera circolare del Provinciale, del 27/03/1805.

23

Cf. AGCP, fotocopia *Registro delle vestizioni 1785-1838*, ff.49-51

24

Cf. *Ib.*, f. 56.



In 1808, for fear of suppression, Fr. General, Fr. Giuseppe Claris of Jesus Crucified, asked the Holy See to be allowed to admit to Profession all of the novices who had completed six months of novitiate. The reasons why novices left the novitiate were found in the words used: they left of their own will; they were advised to leave; or the chapter excluded them for reasons of health; or because it was more clear that they did not have the adequate characteristics to contribute to the Congregation; rarely was the reason given that they had been expelled.

The method and content of formation were those presented in the Rule, and drew from the tradition formed under the direction of the Founder, through his letters to the Masters of Novices, and from the influence of the first Masters, Fr. Marcoaurelio and Fr. Fulgenzio of Jesus. Paul asked the Master to give the young men a correct understanding of the Congregation, of its spirit, and of its mission. He wanted them to learn to love the Congregation as a gift from God, and to learn to fulfill with a perfect charity every action of the day. He particularly insisted on their being formed by an authentic spirit of prayer which would embrace the entire day as a dialogue with Love, Crucified and Risen, who is present in the Eucharist, the center of the Community.

Among the Masters of this period of the Restoration, one that stands out particularly is Fr. Bernardo Spinelli of the Sorrowful Virgin (1777-1857), who began his service as Master in Paliano, in 1815, and who had among his disciples, Blessed Dominic of the Mother of God [Barberi]; he continued as Master at Monte Argentario and in Lucca, for nearly twenty years. He was not the only eminent Master of Novices. The fact that they were re-elected, even when a pontifical dispensation was required, shows the esteem with which they and their wisdom were held.

Some statistics will help us to better understand that particular phase of our history. In PIET province, from 1851 to 1960, the novitiate received as clerics 578 young men, of whom 407 were professed; 216 began as Brothers, of whom 128 were professed. In the CORM province, from 1886 to 1920, 351 young men entered as postulants; 295 were vested; 193 were professed. In the province MICH, from 1842 to 1909, 130 clerics were professed, 37 of whom were French; 29 left the Congregation, 17 of whom were French; 83 were professed as Brothers, 14 were French; 37 left the Institute, 6 of whom were French. In the CORI Province, from 1910 to 1967, 1663 seminarians entered; 646 went to the novitiate; 496 were professed. In the FAM province, between 1908 and 1965, 581 began the novitiate, of whom 418 were professed. In the same province, between 1906 and 1976, 366 clerics were professed, and after profession, 165 left the institute; 89 Brothers were professed, of whom 39 left the institute. In the PAUL province, from 1857 to 1979, 1957 young men began the novitiate as clerics, of whom 1447 were professed, of whom 926 advanced to priesthood. Of these, 483 students left the Congregation 13 died, and 25 transferred to the CRUC and CONC provinces. Still in the PAUL province, from 1854 to 1978 312 young men began the novitiate as Brothers, of whom 247 were professed, and 122 of these eventually left the Congregation²⁵.

25

Arch. Prov. Piet, Registri del noviziato. CASSETTI A., *I Passionisti nell'Alta Italia*, Pianezza 1922, 307. Per Prov. Cori: OSÉS FELIPE D., *El Colegio Apostólico de Gaboria (1910-1967)*, Urretxu



The continuation of spiritual formation in the early years following profession

Just as happened to other congregations after the Council of Trent, even for us Passionists, the student years of professed students were considered a continuation of the novitiate. For this reason, any continuing years of novitiate were not considered necessary. These first years after profession of vows were considered a decisive time for a consolidation of the formation begun in the novitiate. For “clerics,” this period overlapped a continuation of study, while for the “Brothers” (non clerics), a decree of the General Chapter of 1747 (Decrees 19,2; 45,2) set apart the following five years of special formation, which we will see in detail further on.

The period of student life was considered, from the start, as a continuation of the novitiate, under the guidance of the Director of Students. The daily rhythm was constant, with Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, mental prayer and study. Two exceptions provided some relief, in silence, as the students would take an outdoor walk, or tend to cleaning the different parts of the house. There was also daily recreation, when speaking was allowed. The spiritual guide of the students was the Director, who had the rights and duties of the Master of Novices. However, both the students and the Director were fully under the Rector for the general functioning of the Community.ⁱ

Fr. Marcoaurelio Pastorelli (1693-1774), who organized and directed, under the charge of the Founder, the first period of formal studies in 1747, brought into it the entire discipline of the novitiate with respect to the schedule and the use of those means well-suited to support and develop a spirit of recollection, for example:

1. a spiritual “sentiment” to be given by one student (taking turns) at the start of recreation;
2. to recite an ejaculatory prayer and one letter of the “monks alphabet” during recreation when the *presence of God* was called.;
3. on Saturday, to pick from the “flowers of Mary,” one to be fulfilled during the week in honor of Mary;
4. to meet with the Director, every two months, for a spiritual conference on one's spiritual life;
5. custody of the eyes, not to speak with professed out of formation, and much less with outsiders, etc.

Clerics and young Brothers were restrained from contact with seculars (laity), even though their introduction to minor apostolic activities began at this time.

(Guipúzcoa) 1990, 68. Per la Provincia Paul, Luke Hay: *Personnel Statistics 1854 – December 1978*, Prov Paul USA 1978, 12, 87. Per la Prov, Mich statistiche: DOUDIER M., *Les Passionistes en France*, Clamart, Presses Jurassiennes à Dole, 1977, 38-41. Per Prov Fam, C. PEREDA, M. A. DE PRADA, M. I. GARCÍA-LONGORIA, *El Colegio-seminario de Zuera y la Problemática vocacional de la Provincia de la Sagrada Familia. Informe sociológico*, Madrid 1984, f. 41-42.



Young religious were encouraged by conversations with the Founder, with his brother, John Baptist, and by the Regulations themselves (1755), which wanted to help put into practice what was called for by the Rule as the ideal: «Each one will strive, to the extent possible, to remain in sweet and loving attention to the Presence of God in every activity. Oh!, what an angelic exercise this is; it is a way to remain always in prayer, and to bathe all one's actions in the soft balm of a holy love»²⁶.

From 1728, the time given to mental prayer began to be reduced in order for them to have more time for the study of the sacred sciences. This came about from the energetic intervention of Saint Paul of the Cross. From 1728 to 1746, the prayer time for students was three and a half hours of mental prayer daily. Then, from 1746 to 1753, time for mental prayer in winter was two and a half hours, two hours in the summer. From 1753 to 1769, the time allotted for mental prayer was an hour and a half. From 1769 to 1775, one hour. These young religious took part in the Liturgy of the Hours, with the exception of the night office between 1769 to 1775. The dispensation regarding the hours of mental prayer were applicable only for school days.

In 1744 the student body was divided between the two foundations of Sant'Angelo in Vetralla and Sant'Eutizio. Until 1746, the Rule provided for a daily period for study of some of the sacred sciences; this was for about three hours. Thus, from 1746, the year in which a program for formal study was organized, the students were given various accommodations to provide more time and energy for dedicating themselves to serious and more intense study. These accommodations, decreed by General Chapter, were inserted into the text of the 1769 Rule. These accommodations gave a distinct character to these houses of formal study; they had their own observance, fundamentally the same as the other houses, but with fewer common acts of piety in order to dedicate more time to fulfilling their obligations to study.

From 1746 to 1753, in the student houses, the students had four and a half hours of time for study: the students, and their Lectors (Professors) were dispensed from the Mass celebrated before the main meal at mid-day. From 1753 to 1769, however, they had six and half hours for study and class because in those "student houses" matins was recited, not chanted; and as was said, they did not participate in the Mass before the mid-day meal, nor did they attend the Hours of Sext and None. They attended spiritual reading only once daily, and their meditation times were in the morning, evening and night, but for only thirty minutes. In 1769, the hours for study were again increased. In fact, the students were dispensed from rising for the night office and the night meditation. This special schedule was applicable only on school days. On other days, feasts and vacations, the students and their Lectors followed in totality the observance practiced in the other houses. On the days that the students received Holy Communion (three times a week, and feasts), they extended their thanksgiving prayer for thirty minutes. For the sake of their physical health,

26

Regulae et Constitutiones, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 76/I-III/44-53.



there were some other precautions taken: those in “formal study” could take a small breakfast in the morning, and on Friday, they were given a small dish of greens at the fast-day meal.²⁷.

These norms demonstrate that from 1746 to 1769 efforts were undertaken to improve the system of intellectual formation, even though the practical difficulties did not allow for the immediate implementation of what was gradually becoming passing from ideas to discussion to legislation. The legislative development suddenly came to a close in 1775. At that Chapter the criteria for the selection of students are removed, and the “house of Formal Study,” having its own observance, is abolished. In fact, before 1775, “house of Formal Study” meant a place, one for each province, chosen by the Major Superior, and given a special schedule. There were other prerogatives meant to favor an intellectual and pastoral formation which was suitable for the apostolic endeavors of the Congregation.

Lest study diminish the students' spiritual energies, from 1747 to 1769, the students made their spiritual exercises at the end of their vacation period, during the novena in preparation for Christmas, and during Holy Week²⁸. Since the religious would be preparing to bring people to Christ through the proclamation of their salvation in Christ, it was important to promote a profound union with God and in God. To this end there was an emphasis on: solitude, on silence, spiritual reading at the meals, the solitary walk, conversations during recreation on spiritual themes, and feast days with a special emphasis on deeper prayer and revision of life. The Superior also contributed at least twice a week some encouraging instruction. One such time was at the Friday Chapter. «two instances, both bold and modest, which were formative for spiritual growth»²⁹. Through these means, and through the wise application of these principles by the formation personnel, the young men would come to know the values inherent in the Passionist life. They often witnessed these values in the heroic example of their formators and of the religious who were no longer “students.” This witness banished any indifference, and the students quite naturally followed

27

Cf. *Ib.*, 78/III/2-5; 82/111/27-32; 83/IV/35-64. *Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C.*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, n. 56; 129.

28

Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C., F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. 12, 2; 38, 2. *Regulae et Constitutiones*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 85/IV-V/8-16

29

PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista. Regolamento comune del 1775*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 2, Roma, Curia Generale, 1980, 22, n. 114.

17



the example around them. St. Paul of the Cross gave thanks to God quite often in his letters for this fervor. There is no denying that even during his lifetime some young religious were either dismissed, or left the congregation on their own accord. Of 280 professed in the lifetime of the Founder, 58 religious left the Congregation. Of those dismissed, there were 27 priests, 15 students and 16 Brothers³⁰. Overall, however, the work of spiritual formation was effective and shaped persons who were deeply united to God, models of genuine virtue, zealous in helping others and able to guide others in the knowledge of the Love of God revealed in the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. They were credible witnesses of the joy found in sharing in the mystery of the life of Christ and founders of a genuine school of spirituality.

The established program of study in preparation for priesthood in the Congregation was intended to cover six years. It began with two years of Philosophy, followed by three years of dogmatic and moral theology. Finally, the last year was dedicated completely to study of Sacred Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. During the last year there were also some practical apostolic experiences. Everything was intended to prepare excellent catechists, preachers of popular missions, preachers of retreats to clergy and religious, expert confessors and spiritual directors.

With the years, the fear began to grow that the selection process applied to the students would gradually create an elitist mentality in the Congregation, to the detriment of unity and fraternal communion. Specifically, it was believed that the students, having grown accustomed to a series of dispensations, especially regarding the rising at night, would not be able to live the entire observance once their formation period was over and they were once again in a non-formation community. This led to a radical change in the configuration of student life which occurred in the General Chapter of 1775.

Every Province was authorized to have “one or more houses of study.” The special daily schedule for the “house of Formal Study [Studio formale]” was abolished.

From 1775, therefore, the term “Formal Study [Studio formale]” meant the group of students who, in any of the houses, were engaged in the regular course of study. Other students, who for reasons approved by the competent superior (e.g., illness) were engaged in formation outside of the student group were classified as “not engaged in formal study [non addetti allo studio formale]”³¹. The dispensation from the night office for the students was ended, but it remained for their professors (Lectors), with the exception of feasts and vacations (Rule, 22). Thereafter, any retreat serving a group of students became the “house of Formal Study [Studio formale]”.

30

BARTOLI M., *Catalogo*, XVI.

31

Cf. *Regulae et Constitutiones*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 80-81/III-V/10ss.



There remained the reduction of time for mental prayer on school days: a half hour, whether at night, in the morning and in the evening; while on the days of receiving Holy Communion, they spent a further half-hour in thanksgiving.³².

What could be the reason why, in 1775, the students' situation reverted to what it had been prior to 1746, leaving them, however, with the amount of time for study that they enjoyed from 1746 to 1753, which was only thirty minutes more than the time prior to 1746? Due to lack of documentation, we don't know the reasons. Perhaps it had to do with the institution of "Formal Study [studio formale]" with its "special observance," which was feared would create among the religious a "class consciousness" that would impact the community life. This was something already lamented among other Institutes who saw the development of a privileged class based on their "graduate" status. Perhaps it was the fear that the professed who were formed in those special retreats would, over time, would not be able to accept the observance as lived in the other retreats. Finally, perhaps it was the fear that the priests would accumulate special "rights," similar to those of the students, as they were preparing for their preaching assignments³³. The fact shows that there was no unanimity of views on the way to solving a real problem in formation of young men who need to acquire the necessary knowledge for the demanding ministry of the missions. This difficulty, with greater or lesser degrees of challenge, continues throughout the history of the Congregation.

The positive consequence of this change is that every community would be able to enjoy the helpful benefit of having students who brought spirit and vitality into the retreat. While the priests were about doing their apostolic ministries, the community continued its observance thanks to the significant contribution of the students. The uninterrupted rhythm of liturgical prayer and the fervent vitality of the community provided by the nucleus of religious who maintained the ascetical practices typical of the Congregation. Furthermore, the presence of the students allowed the priests who were in the retreat to dedicate more time to the study necessary for their preparation for ministries, to be available for confessions and spiritual direction for those people who came to the church of the retreat. Another positive aspect is that this division of the student religious among different retreats facilitated their economic support.

Some students had the good fortune of being taught by excellent Lectors in a setting extremely favorable to study, resulting in excellent academic achievement. However, in general, the negative

32

Ib., 83/IV-V/35ss.

33

Un'eco di questi timori si trova nelle parole del Preposito generale p. Bernardo Prelini nel 1878, che ricordava quelle dispense accordate agli studenti dei "ritiri di studio" come una innovazione che non giovò né a migliorare la scienza né la santità, cf. *Decreti e rac.*, 141 linea 30-35.



consequences were manifold. For example, it was not possible to provide each student community the best Lectors. Until 1851 (Decree 377,4) the students had a single Lector, and he combined the duties of both spiritual and academic director for all the subjects taught. Another inconvenience had to do with the small number of students, which could impede developing a spirit of study. Finally, during the season of the “quest” (grain, wine and oil), the students and their Lector often had to supply for the role of the Brothers, necessarily reducing the time available for school.

Fr. Serafino Giammaria (1804-1879), a companion of Fr. Dominic Barberi in Belgium, and Master of Novices, wrote this summary of the Congregation's traditions regarding the lives of its students:

«The education which a novice has received during the novitiate is hardly begun and is focused on the qualities of virtue, it is hardly enough upon which to base a judgement with respect to whether the novice should be admitted to profession or not [...]. The novice, following profession, joins a student group in order to continue his religious formation, more than to advance in the humanities [...]; the education which should be given to our students should not undermine that education which the Master of Novices has given to him, and which we accept was really given.»³⁴.

The students continued to be formed in small groups in different retreats where they helped to maintain the spirit of prayer and augment the body of religious in the house. The community was able to maintain their presence economically. The small student groups numbered 4 or 5, rarely 7; and it was an exception to find 10/12, as in Rome in 1825 and 1827, while there were 9 at Sant'Angelo in Vetralla in 1825.

At the Generalate of Sts. John and Paul, at the start of 1825, there were 10 students, 6 were already subdeacons or deacons. At the start of 1826, there were 7 students, of whom 2 were subdeacons, and studied philosophy with Fr. Ambrose of the Immaculate Conception. On January 1st of 1827, the students numbered 12, of whom 3 were priests, 2 were deacons and 2 were subdeacons³⁵.

The part of their lives that was most subject to change was the program content; this was subject to changes in the times and circumstances of their lives, especially after the Congregation spread out of Italy (Europe, Belgium, France, Holland, England, Ireland) and the expansion into the world beyond Europe (Australia, United States of America), in the era of Fr. Antonio Testa (1839-1862).

34

Consuetudines Congr. SS. Crucis et Passionis D.N.J.C. Editio critica textuum PP. Dominici, Seraphim, Bernardi, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 57-60; cf. anche 180-184.

35

AGCP, *Platea SS. Giovanni e Paolo 1773-1829*, f. 114, 136,154



This evolving change was most evident among the student communities because the novitiates had maintained a greater stability of criteria and values.

An example is when Fr. Antonio Testa, concerned for the spread of the Institute outside of Italy, wishes that the students prepare themselves for a dialogue with non-Catholics. He called for holding conferences on polemical religious subjects. Their objective was to bring this experience to their apostolate. Times had changed, and mediocrity in missions and retreats would not be acceptable. Even the physical welfare of the students was considered a factor in their formation; they were to be provided with better food, and given access to physical exercise.

Their theological and spiritual formation advanced side by side during the years after the novitiate. Their lives as students was precisely that time in which these humane subjects were combining in order to form the Passionist religious into readiness for an ascetical and missionary life.

With respect to **priestly ordination** of clerics, the General Chapter of 1753 determined that no one should be advanced to priestly ordination except after five years of Profession³⁶. As sacred ordination approached, it signaled a more intense concentration on the liturgical rubrics so that the young priest could fulfill them with faithful simplicity and devotion, leaving aside any affectations which might distract the people. The Founder, suggesting that the devout celebration of the Mass not exceed thirty minutes, insisted on thirty minutes of prayer prior to the celebration of the Mass, and another thirty minutes to follow the Mass. Saint Paul wanted there to be attentive vigilance over the constant practice of virtues by the cleric prior to ordination.

«If he did not see someone well-grounded in virtue, says one witness, and firm in his vocation, he would not allow him to proceed to ordination. This was his recommendation to the superiors *pro tem* and when he saw that someone did not act about the chapel with attentive decorum, he would say that the person did not have an ecclesiastical spirit, for which reason he would not be allowed to be ordained without a long testing»³⁷.

By experience, he was convinced that ordination could also be an occasion for someone to fall back, relaxing his efforts, therefore the Regulations of 1755 say:

36

Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. n. 58.

37

Processi IV, 253, 385. *Let.* III, 716: ad un neosacerdote ricordava: ora è «obbligato a maggior perfezione ed essere vero imitatore di Gesù Cristo..., s'avvezzi a celebrare con grand'apparecchio..., con fervido ringraziamento mentale dopo, si impratichisca bene delle rubriche del messale che è preciso obbligo... studi e si abiliti per aiutare i prossimi».



«The clerics should strive to acquire the most solid virtue; especially obedience, humility and recollection. Otherwise, when they shall have been elevated to the priestly dignity, they will fall into such a pit of laxness that they will be incorrigible. They will be the heaviest cross for the Superiors, the scandal of the community, and the scourge of the Congregation. The true spirit of a cleric, whether it is good or bad, will not be known until he is ordained»³⁸.

We find this concept inserted into the Regulations of 1878, under the chapters that were added that year, about the students, and the Director and Lector. It is a content that, although edited over time, remained through the Regulations of 1964.

The doctrinal orientation of the Congregation was also strictly Thomistic, both in philosophy and dogmatic theology. Out of caution that some young man, having studied philosophy prior to entry in the Congregation, would not have studied and mastered St. Thomas, he would be made to repeat the philosophy program, using the text books in use in the Congregation. This outlook ended with the Second Vatican Council, which opened the door to different theological currents. The students began to attend the Roman Pontifical Universities with orientations different from the Thomist, for example, the Jesuits at the Gregorian and the Franciscans at the Antonianum.

During the time of the restoration of 1814, and throughout the 19th century, the Passionist religious had a strong and **profound sense of belonging and of identity**. This was the result of the formation they received from formators and superiors, before the Napoleonic Suppression, who had known the Founder. Another influence was the effort and sacrifices undertaken by the religious who remained faithful during the suppression, and who accepted the invitation to return to the Congregation, fully aware that they would have to sacrifice much to rebuild the houses, reorganize the communities, and advance the apostolate.

Thus, it is no surprise if, based on the conclusion of the Rule and Constitutions³⁹, the Congregation was generally called “mother” or “good mother,” and the religious felt themselves “sons” who owed the Congregation gratitude, respect and the effort to give it a glorious luster before God and the Church. The formators and the superiors of that time inculcated this love for the Congregation as their “Mother,” by asking for fidelity to the Rule, punctuality in the observance, to

38

PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista. Regolamento comune del 1775*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 2, Roma, Curia Generale, 1980, 38, n. 307.

39

Regole e Costituzioni della Congr. dei Chierici scalzi della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C. 1775, cap. 38: “A tutti i suoi carissimi figli... raccomanda la Congregazione l'osservanza ed il rispetto alle sante Regole e Costituzioni e come buona Madre dice a ciascuno: Figlio, osserva i miei comandi e avrai la vita”.



become useful for the Congregation, whether in those things that promote the good of the community, and more so, by undertaking well and effectively the ministries proper to the Institute. Another way of showing love for the “Mother Congregation” was the good example to be given at all times and places.⁴⁰.

The life of the Congregation was lived concretely by each community there where it was located and where it witnessed to the charism and its apostolic service. It was in the community that the religious were to show that they had in their hearts the love of God, revealed in the Passion, and that the love in their hearts was the root of a gratuitous love toward others, as is the love of Christ. Formation had to work hard to inculcate a genuine equilibrium in the religious, and that he be able to love others as Jesus loves them. The young men were asked to treat one another with serene simplicity, as well as with respect and care so that no one should be a burden to the other. In order to achieve this goal, the young religious was taught to see Jesus in his brother.

The sense of belonging was positively shown by one's sense of being integrated in the culture of the Congregation, which is called uniformity. It was a uniformity which touch not only the basic aspects of vows and apostolic works, but even the style of the habit, the mantle and the hat; or the kind of underwear worn, and the ritual quality of those actions spaced throughout the day and performed in common. It was an important part of the service of authority to safeguard uniformity. To distance oneself from the lived uniformity was to reject the culture which formed a bond among the persons, it was a lack of obedience, but even more, it was a recanting of the words spoken at profession, when the person was asking to enter the community and to live according to the Rule and Constitutions. Such a mentality was active not only in the ecclesiastical society, but even in civil life, and in the revolutionary republic which did not tolerate dissent in styles, gestures and verbal expressions which it had established as a sign of acceptance of the new order of things, and therefore, as a sign of belonging.

Once again, the program formation proved its worth, overall, and produced excellent fruits of holiness, a true sense of belonging, and conferred a singular identity. This was demonstrated by the religious invited to Bulgaria and Valachia, where they confronted situations they had never imagined. They knew how to perform their work with fidelity to Christ and to the people, keeping a profound sense of belonging, because of which, once their missionary service was fulfilled, they did not find themselves strangers to the community which they had once left and to which they were now returning. Those religious who took the Congregation out of Italy with grand success, were formed precisely in this period of the first years of the 1800's. These were the same religious who courageously faced the new suppression of religious institutes in 1860 and beyond.

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AGCP, BÀRBERI D., *Breve ragguaglio della vita e virtù del fu P. Mariano di Gesù*, offre molte testimonianze del modo di educare i giovani e dei punti cardini sui quali si insisteva. Altri validi elementi per comprendere la linea guida e pratica della formazione in: *Vita del Conf. Filippo del SS. Sacramento. Vita del Conf. Martino del SS. Crocifisso*.



The documents of the commissions created by the General Chapters spoke quite clearly about the strength of formation in the Congregation. One must mention, however, that from the middle of the 1800's through the first 20 years of the 1900's, there was a decline in study due especially to the lack of an adequate preparation in areas of literature. Efforts to better the situation arose in the 1830's, they included bringing the students together, providing a better education for the Lectors, and adding Lectors in order to redistribute the load of courses, bringing a study of literature to the minor seminaries. The frequent repetition of instructions on this matter showed the practical difficulty which often, at the local level, met efforts to harmonize the demands of the well-being of the community, the finances of the community, and the intellectual preparation of the members.

After the Second World War, many of these problems found some solutions in Lectors who were better prepared by university studies, and the admission of candidates who had already studied in secondary and higher institutions. Student bodies were re-grouped so that toward the 1960's, every Province would have one community for philosophy and another for theology. There were often meetings within Provinces for the Lectors, at which improvements were considered for the intellectual and spiritual advancement of the students.⁴¹.

The economic forecast made for the formation of the young rested quite heavily on the individual provinces. From 1969, efforts were begun to accommodate the presence of the students in academic centers outside the retreat without prejudice to their spiritual formation as Passionists. The object was to maintain and develop their sense of identity, their love for the community, their understanding and appreciation for living a life of prayer, of penitence and of study as elements inherent in being "Passionist Apostolic men.". Through the documentation from Chapters, and other Province meetings, one can understand the experiences had in different part of the Congregation as they tried to assure a spiritual, intellectual and apostolic formation that was adequate for the times. Among these experiences was the emergence of Catholic Theological Union at Chicago⁴².

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Cf. su questi convegni: *Proceedings of the Second Lectors Conference of Holy Cross Province*, Dec. 28-30, 1955, in *The Passionist*, vol. IX, 1956, 313-424. *Notiziario Passionista 1956-57; 1958. Proceedings of the Third Lectors Congress of Holy Cross Province*. Dec 26-29, 1961. Altre informazioni in: *The Passionist*.

42

BECHTOLD P., *Catholic Theological Union at Chicago. The founding years, 1965-1975. History and Memoir*, Chicago 1993.



*Formation for the Religious Brothers*⁴³

We will now look at the formation for the Religious Brothers in the Congregation, from the time of their beginnings. There are some differences to note.

First of all, it is clear that from the time of the Founder, Brother postulants were expected to have the same qualities and gifts as the cleric postulants, except, naturally, the scope of their educations. A robust constitution was expected. The postulants' formation was intended to give them, especially if they came from a place of limited educational resources, a standard of correct and courteous manners so that their living in common would reflect that training as well as be marked by charity, good will, and mutual understanding. The many expectations of good manners that were listed in the handbook for novices were directed principally to the Religious Brothers. The fact that many Brothers began their path to Religious Life outside of the novitiate community (entrusted to a rector some religious in the community where he would complete the novitiate), means that he did not always benefit from a cultural-spiritual formation adequate for his needs.

Spiritual formation for the Brothers consisted of catechetical instruction which these postulants truly needed. Afterwards, they received instructions on prayer, on the obligations of the religious vows, on the purposes and ends of the Congregation—the same as for the clerics. However, when the Brother did not find himself a part of the Novitiate Community, it was not certain that these instructions were carried out with the regularity and effort which they required.

Saint Paul of the Cross held before the Brothers a high standard of holiness, no less demanding than that which was proposed for the clerics; the holiness of the Brother would be realized as a manifestation of charity in the fulfillment of his offices:

«Be diligent, prompt and exact in fulfilling the obligations of the office which shall be given you. You should prefer it to any other particular devotion of yours, seeing there the most holy will of God. Therefore, do all with great diligence and purity of intention, as someone who labors in the presence of God and for God. Encourage one another, avoiding disputes, and helping one another in your offices with great charity, as true brothers in Jesus Christ»⁴⁴.

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Io volutamente non uso mai il termine “laico” che viene invece usato nei libri e nel linguaggio corrente, proprio a sottolineare una maggiore unità con i chierici. Ciò che accomuna i chierici dai non chierici sono i voti, essi sono entrambi religiosi.

44

Regulae et Constitutiones, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 164, n. 127, 128. Cf. anche PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Guida per l'animazione spirituale della vita passionista. Regolamento comune del 1775*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 2, Roma, Curia Generale, 1980, Indice (Parte seconda: Degli Uffici).



The help provided the Brothers for their spiritual growth was more focused during the first five years following Profession. By a decree of the General Chapter of 1747, the newly professed Brothers, at a par with the period of formation of the clerics, would remain together either with the students, or with the novices. They were under the direction of either the Master of Novices or the Director of Students, according to the community to which they were assigned. A great part of this special instruction was left to the good will of the Rectors. They should “win the confidence of the Brothers,” said Paul, “because they are encouraged in their observance and in their service of God through the positive regard of the superior.” At least once a week, the Rector should instruct, or have instructed, the Brothers “in matters of our Faith, in prayer, and in the observance of the Rules.” This instruction was usually given after Sunday vespers, with a reduction in the time given for the common walk which was allowed in those days.

In 1753, Saint Paul instructed the community at San Eutizio that besides teaching the Brothers Christian Doctrine, they should also be instructed on how to serve Mass, and «at least once a month, they receive further instruction on how to pray well, to receive Holy Communion more devoutly, and how to be recollected during their working periods; they were exhorted to raise their minds to God often through the use of ejaculatory prayers»⁴⁵.

In 1758 he specified that the instruction on meditation could be given on Friday, without dropping the instruction on Christian Doctrine which was given on Sunday⁴⁶. The religious brothers who were on the quest were exhorted to make an hour of mental prayer in the morning, and another in the evening; however, they were permitted to fulfill this requirement after they were on their way, in silence and recollection.

In 1766, in order to better care for the spiritual good of the Brothers who had been on the quest, it was determined that at the end of the period of questing, the Brothers should make a six or eight day retreat in the house, without the Superior's engaging them in other duties, unless it was a truly urgent case. Here we note a sense of equality in providing the Brothers the same opportunity and means for spiritual renewal that was offered to missionaries and students⁴⁷.

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S. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *Lettere ai Passionisti*, vol. I, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma, CIPI, 1998, 890.

46

Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C., F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. n. 19; *Regulae et Constitutiones*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Romae 1958, 124/I-V/61s; *Decreti visita Sant'Eutizio 1753*, decreti per i Laici, n. 4; *visita 1758*, decreti per la casa, n. 3

47



The Brothers' acquisition of skills

The Brothers were taught skills during the novitiate, so that they could competently fulfill domestic chores, especially the making of bread and working in the kitchen. It was established that they would not be admitted to profession of vows if they did not show that they had learned well the fundamental offices needed for the material functioning of the community⁴⁸. The instruction was received from a Brother who was expert in the matter, and whose religious life was exemplary. Other occupations, like mason, carpenter, tailor, and gardener were taken up as needed. Some Brothers would have come to the Congregation with some of these skills already practiced. The Brothers who were engaged in fatiguing work, such as the garden, building or carpentry, could take an appropriate breakfast which was prepared for them by the one responsible. This breakfast would consist of «a bit of bread, with a small piece of cheese, or some other like food; and a little wine, i.e., one or two small cups of watered wine, like that served in the refectory»⁴⁹. The contribution of the Brothers for the material development of the Congregation was very great, whether by helping in the construction or remodeling of different retreats, or by working as carpenters to provide the necessary furniture, or by cultivating a garden, which in some retreats, like Sant'Angelo, San Giuseppe, Sant'Eutizio and Paliano, was made to arise out of nothing. Afterwards, the Brothers conducted the quest when it became the normal means of support for the Community, and they carried out the chores necessary for the maintenance of the house beyond kitchen, tailor shop and infirmary.

The material needs of the retreats were great, and often, the directives regarding the Brothers were overlooked. In 1905, recognizing the norms of the Holy See, and to provide for the spiritual formation of the Brothers, it was determined that prior to entrance in the novitiate, the Brother candidate should stay in the novitiate community for six months of “probation;” and after profession, he should remain there for what time was possible, and under the direction of the Master of Novices (Decree 543).

The situation did not improve much. Thus, the Vice-General, Fr. Pietro Paolo Moreschini, proposed to the General Chapter in 1908 that in order to assure the Brothers of their needed spiritual

Lettere, IV, 281, n. 3.

48

Cf. Decreti visita S. Giuseppe 1765, 1771; *Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C*, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. n. 131

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Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C, F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. n. 144.

27



formation, they should have a protracted novitiate, lasting two years; or, that prior to their final vows, they return to the novitiate for six months to focus on their spiritual formation under the direction of the Master of Novices. He also asked that the prohibition be renewed against sending Brothers on the quest who had not completed five years in vows; and he asked that the monthly spiritual conference with the Spiritual Director or the Superior be reinstated⁵⁰.

The General Chapter confirmed the addition of a six-month postulancy (Decree 573), but did not accept the rest of the recommendation. However, afterwards, some Rectors and Directors of Students took to heart the responsibility of appropriate spiritual assistance to the Brothers, and a general improvement of their situation was achieved. Notwithstanding a general improvement, in 1946 there was a proposal to study the causes of the deficient spiritual formation of the Brothers, on account of which many left the Congregation shortly after profession. The General Chapter recommended that the Superiors implement existing norms⁵¹. Finally, the General Chapter of 1952 authorized (Decree 742) Provincial Chapters to determine that the Brothers, following their novitiate, would remain under the immediate direction of the Master of Novices, or Director of Students, or a designated priest, for some years.

In 1958, the decree was made more precise by stating that this special period could extend even beyond perpetual profession (Decree 766, 2).

The most compelling measures for the spiritual formation of the Brothers were taken by the Province of St. Paul of the Cross (USA). About 1940, reflecting on the fact that between 1890 and 1940, the Province had seen only 12 professions of Brothers, they asked themselves how to remedy this lack of Brothers, how could they receive an adequate formation. The Provincial Chapter of 1941 (Decree 2) established that ordinarily the Brothers would remain in the novitiate until their perpetual profession.

Following this period, they would be assigned a Director. The Provincial Chapter of 1953, having in mind Decree 742 of the General Chapter, reconfirmed (Decree 2), i.e., to not transfer a Brother out of the Novitiate unless he was able to be assigned to a retreat which had made provision for the formation of Brothers. It was to this end that Holy Family Retreat, West Hartford, was configured. Newly professed Brothers would take part in a three-year training program there. In 1962, the Provincial Chapter (Decree 26) reconfirmed the prior norms, with the specification that the juniorate of Brothers should last for a period comparable to that of the clerical students. These efforts led to the "Formation Program for Brothers."

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Ib., 151.

51

Ib., 178; decr. 716.



Gradually, there were other initiatives among the Provinces: Holy Cross (USA), Pietà (Italy), in Spain and then at the level of the Interprovincial Conferences. These initiatives were intended to provide a better spiritual and intellectual formation for the Brothers, as well as to better study the Brothers' vocation and place in the Congregation. Contributing to this theological, spiritual, and juridic study of the Brothers' Role have been various meetings of Brothers at interprovincial and inter-congregational (1982) levels⁵².

Formation for Pastoral and Missionary Undertakings

We will now take a very rapid look at the pastoral and missionary formation offered so that when the Religious completed the formation program, he would be committed to the proclamation, the evangelization, and the mission: this was the goal of formation. The intellectual and spiritual formation were undertaken in view of the apostolate, the ultimate purpose of the Institute itself.

«This is the purpose of this nascent Congregation: to equip oneself through prayer, penance, fasting, cries and tears to help one's neighbor, to sanctify souls and to convert sinners»⁵³. It was for this apostolic purpose that a postulant was expected to have common sense, clear and intelligible diction, and polite and sociable manners in order to more readily carry out the proper mission of the Congregation. It was during the novitiate that novices exercised their memories by learning Scripture passage; they held recitations in order to strengthen their diction and their voices, and learning to overcome the psychological fear of being in front of the public.

Pastoral formation and preparation for preaching happened in an integral manner during the sixth year of the plan of studies, the period when the students were introduced to knowledge and understanding of the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. They were to learn how to explain the Catholic Faith to the faithful. To theory were added some practical experiences of pastoral works, which would vary according to the determinations of the Lectors and the Local Superiors. The plan of study for this year had a very concrete outline, based on the work of St. Vincent Strambi who was a Lector for many years, and who drafted his lessons for possible publication, although they were never published⁵⁴.

52

AGCP, Vedi “Il Fratello Passionista”, “The Passionist”. AA.VV., *Il Fratello religioso nella comunità ecclesiale oggi. Atti del 1° convegno intercongregazionale Roma 18-23 aprile 1982*, F. TACCONE (ed.), Roma 1983.

53

Cf. PAOLO DELLA CROCE, *La Congregazione della passione di Gesù cos'è e cosa vuole*, F. Giorgini (ed.), in «Ricerche di Storia e Spiritualità Passionista», n. 1, Roma, Curia Generale, 1978, 11.21.

54

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In his introduction, he expresses his desire to weave together the studies of Sacred Scripture, mystical theology, ecclesial magisterium, the Fathers, modern authors in apologetics, while he presents principles of rhetoric and for mastery of the different kinds of preaching which are called for by the apostolic end of the Congregation⁵⁵. The resources for the doctrine to explain and the examples which will explain what is said and which will help the people to remember the lessons should be Sacred Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, lives of saints, and the history of the Church. The study of Sacred Scripture should provide the students with a magnificent appreciation of the sublime excellence of divine Scripture, so much so that the young men will fall in love with Scripture and will study it “with a love for truth.” It was especially important to introduce the students to an understanding of the books of the Bible, but especially to the study of those books which were useful for preaching, and those which were needed in order «to find in Sacred Scripture the different hidden paths by which one arrived at a more intimate union with God, and the foundations of all of mystical theology»⁵⁶. The same instructions were given for the study of the Fathers of the Church.

The studies of this sixth year are also the specific preparation for the missions. Although the decision of the General Chapter of 1753 was to create a special course for training men for the popular missions, practically a seventh year of study, was never found to be practical for

Di San Vincenzo Strambi rimane: *Precetti di eloquenza sacra*, f. 72; che, ritoccati dal p. Luca, furono stampati nel 1838. *Metodo di studio*, f. 168, circa lo studio dei SS. Padri e della S. Scrittura e come usare l'una gli altri per la vita spirituale e per la predicazione. Opera di valore e piena di indicazioni psicologiche e metodologiche molto pertinenti. Pensieri sul modo di spiegare il Vangelo nelle Omelie Parrocchiali, f. 12. Si conservano anche una miscellanea di appunti di lezioni o di opere di apologetica e sulla teologia mistica che riflettono, almeno in parte, le sue lezioni agli studenti. Un fascicolo ms. di *Additiones et Notae ad Theologiam dogmaticam Habert*. In AG. Fondo Strambi, cas. II, n. 5, 7, 14.

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Scrive nella introduzione: «Non s'apprende d'ordinario bene scienza veruna senza Maestro, così par, che il profitto dei Giovani richiegga che siano diretti nell'esercizio di comporre, nello studio delle divine Scritture, nella lezione dei Padri, e poiché si deve in ogni cosa risparmiare per quanto si può il tempo, chi non vede, che riuscirebbe utilissimo l'unire, se si potesse, insieme questi studi, regolati però con tal discrezione e saviezza che fuori d'ogni confusione ed imbarazzo uno portasse lume all'altro? A far questo vi vorrebbe un piano, o metodo di studio ideato con tutto giudizio. Noi ne procuriamo qui uno, il quale se verrà approvato da persone intelligenti, servirà almeno a dare idea di ciò che desideriamo».

56

Paolo inculcava agli studenti, e gli insegnanti lo seguirono in questa espressione di fede, a citare i testi della S. Scrittura proferendo chiaramente le parole in modo che tutti gli uditori le potessero capire bene, «perché, diceva, essendo parole divine, s'imprimono più vivamente negli ascoltanti» stimolandoli a riflettere meglio e a convertirsi a Dio, *Processi I*, 369. L'uso di citare i testi della Scrittura era generale presso i predicatori, ma il fondatore sottolinea la fede da avere nella parola di Dio che è sempre efficace come la stessa Scrittura afferma.



implementation during this time⁵⁷. The young men were helped to prepare for their preaching, even after they finished the formal course of study, under the guidance of their same Lector, or another experienced missionary. These took their responsibility seriously, wanting the religious to be both effective and inspiring. The fact that Passionists were insistently sought out for missions and spiritual exercises shows how well-prepared they were. On the other hand, the fact that the number of religious assigned to parish missions was not excessively high shows that there was also a certain reserve about assigning men to this challenging ministry.

Formation today

This aspect is not strictly our competence, but I would like to give some suggestions which emerge from our meeting.

Today, formation should aim to rediscover the charismatic Passionist identity, without which not only is perseverance difficult, but also an inner and outer fervor, i.e., our fraternal life in community, and our apostolate. We should have a stronger emphasis in formation on those aspects that have to do with configuration to Christ crucified, not only to be able to keep the memory of the Passion of Jesus, but to truly be a living memorial of Christ crucified. The scope of this formation is broad: personal, spiritual, communitarian, intellectual and pastoral growth. There should be, furthermore, an evaluation to assess whether this formation approach is being inculcated in the students or not. Formation should develop in the young a deep sense of belonging to the Congregation itself; they should feel it to be their true family (a “mother,” as our Founder used to say). Which will lead the young religious to work hard so that the Congregation will continually shine before God and before men and women, as St. Paul of the Cross desired. The example for being conformed to Christ crucified is found in the Sorrowful Mother, who gazes on him at Calvary.

Today we emphasize the human development of the candidates; we consider their aptitude for a psychic/physical equilibrium, which is indispensable if the spiritual elements are to take root and bear fruit. This unfolding of formation takes place in a context of community, of family, of mutual service, so that our life is a real witness to the whole world. The pastoral dimension of formation is recalled daily by Pope Francis, who wishes the Church to be outward bound, looking for encounters with other persons, looking in territorial peripheries and in the existential margins of life. We should be the specialists in this regard because of our missionary tradition of going out to the poor and to be among the very poor.

Intellectual formation is essential in all of the aspects we have treated because ignorance of human, spiritual, community and missionary dimensions of life will keep one from achieving the purposes assigned to formation programs. As we have seen, formation was always considered of

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Decreti e Raccomandazioni dei Capitoli Generali della Congregazione della SS. Croce e Passione di N.S.G.C., F. GIORGINI (ed.), Roma 1960, decr. n. 57.



great importance, from the time of St. Paul of the Cross. Intellectual formation was sought in order to produce wisdom and holiness of life.

I conclude by wishing you a successful meeting, and may the Passion of Jesus and the sorrows of Mary be always engraved on our hearts.

P. Alessandro Ciciliani cp