



SIF

International **S**ecretariat for Promotion and **F**ormation

PROPOSAL
WHILE ACCOMPANYING
THE NEWLY PERPETUALLY PROFESSED
PAULINE RELIGIOUS
DURING THE FIRST 5 YEARS

Rome 2013

1. Description of the specific formative situation

The *Constitutions* and the *Directory* (art. 146.2) already provide for a period of more intensive preparation for the perpetual profession, in the same way that is being advised a period of accompaniment for the gradual insertion to full time activity of the newly perpetually professed priest or disciple, which helps the individual religious to assume in an adequate way all the personal responsibilities that such an insertion involves. It is an accompaniment lasting for a period of at least five years that helps the perpetually professed to pass from the community of “formation” to integration with full rights in the apostolic life, with a particular commitment for the mission of the Society of Saint Paul and within a community.

The *Constitutions* – in art. 5 (but it’s also useful to read again nos. 12-34 of the *Documents* of the Special General Chapter of 1969-1971) indicate in these terms the commitment of the Pauline priest and disciple:

The typical area which in the specific apostolate the **Pauline priest** fills up, in virtue of his ordination and association with the episcopate, is that of being an expert in the Word of God, giving assurance and official character to the preaching of the message of salvation.

The presence of the **Pauline disciple** in the organization of the Congregation is closely complementary and co-essential with that of the priest. His typical area is that of being an active mediator of the Word of God with regard to social communication, “multiplying indefinitely” the priest’s preaching.

During these last decades there has been a general cultural levelling and these “typical areas” have somewhat undergone modifications. The apostolic area typical of the priest has not always been filled up, and many priests are not able to carry out to the best even the pastoral functions. On the other hand, they have sometimes occupied the area of the disciple. Of the actual 18 General Directors of the Apostolate, for example, – the function that according to the *SdA.M*, nos. 421-426.5, has organizational and management tasks – 16 are priests, and it is not said that all of them have an appropriate preparation in order to fill up that role.

Now, if during the preceding formative stages nothing has been done to deal with and resolve the knot of the “typical areas,” it is physiological that in the first period after the perpetual profession the latent problems can explode under the form of vocational identity crises, general lack of motivation, stress, etc.

So we can ask ourselves regarding the importance of an accompaniment and of a specific formation for the newly perpetually professed.

Because – as has been said – one who passes from a life regulated by academic or study commitments, under the charge of a “master,” to a life completely dedicated to the apostolate, with new schedules dictated by “auto programming” that are not always in harmony with community life and with a regulated spiritual life, can undergo some dispersion if not a true and proper disorientation of himself.

The Conciliar Decree relative to priestly formation *Optatam totius*, on the basis of those that at that time were “recent” documents of the Holy See (cf OT 22, note 48) asked for a gradual introduction («*gradatim introducatur*») of the young clergy to the priestly life and to apostolic activity. The principle is always the same and is based on the method of

“graduality” that must characterize every formative activity and every process that aims to be truly pedagogical.

It should also be said that both the *Constitutions and Directory* (cf art. 130.3) and the *Ratio formationis* (no. 227) call to mind that during the last period of formation there must be an individual orientation and also a period of immediate preparation for the perpetual profession lasting for at least six months (*Const.*, art. 146.2). It cannot be said, therefore, that the newly perpetually professed arrives at the conclusion of his formation unprepared.

2. Objectives and real situations

It is about strengthening and consolidating the human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral formation. It is normal, in fact, that passing from “theory” to “practice” of the Pauline religious life a help and a support is made indispensable.

The indications that have been offered for preparation for the perpetual profession apply; in this case, however, the help must be offered in support of situations that from time to time concretely present themselves and sometimes even “in a dramatic way.”

2.1. On the *human level* problems are anticipated in the functional relationships with persons (confreres or not, men or women), that is, in relationships that are established in view of accomplishing our apostolate. Sometimes it is a matter of silencing or not allowing ourselves to be conditioned by our emotions, so as to reach a serene and efficacious collaboration. Sometimes it is important to know how to put in first place the demands of the apostolate and to blunt our preferences, even the ones that are affective.

In direct dealings with lay or “corporate” life, we can forget that we are religious and allow exigencies or egoistic pretences of various types to become fashionable.

2.2. On the *intellectual level* we cannot be satisfied with what we know or with the eventual position that has been entrusted to us in the “corporate” hierarchical organigram. We must not forget that certain roles are constantly “won” through the acquisition of competences and the professional organization of those abilities that they imply.

And this is true even when the Circumscription has not yet been able to organize a continuing formation *ad hoc* (cf *Const.* arts. 156ff).

2.3. On the *spiritual level*, from the time that there is no one anymore who calls to the commitment of the Visit, of the meditation and of the Eucharistic celebration (be it the master or the life lived in community), it can happen that this aspect of our Pauline life becomes weak. This is the occasion to put to the test the “endurance” of our formation, and not always can we do it alone; but it is also the occasion to make consistent and efficacious this “wheel” of the “Pauline cart” in full harmony and osmosis with the other wheels (cf *Const.* arts. 7-10).

2.4. On the *pastoral level* the newly perpetually professed Pauline comes face to face for the first time in a complete and total way with the reality of his religious life: he can be fascinated with it, but also frightened by it. It is not unthinkable that in the face of the real responsibilities that the Congregation entrusts to him, the individual is seized by panic and attempts to flee through types of more easygoing life or carves for himself suitable activities

that he will try to justify through a thousand ways: “everybody does it”; “who am I so as to become better than the others?”; “I too have my rights”; “I do nothing bad, on the contrary!...”.

If taken seriously, the Pauline pastoral commitment makes one tremble. Hence the importance of a “wise” person who in light of a mature and purified experience helps the “enterprising” and/or scrupulous newly perpetually professed to not succumb under the real weight of the pastoral commitment or to not look for alternative ways.

3. Subjects

The newly perpetually professed has the right to be assisted – and sometimes not only during the first five years – and he must be able to count on a trusted person with whom he can exchange his experiences and from whom he can receive support. Applying in a special way for him is what the *Constitutions* attribute to every Pauline member:

166. Superiors must therefore guide the members toward a progressive maturity, with firmness and understanding, as sons of God, acting in such a way so that their submission become voluntary and they accept cheerfully the renunciations inherent in community life.

In accompanying the newly perpetually professed the **Superiors** have surely a special responsibility: on the circumscriptional level (cf *SdA.M* no. 212) and on the local level; however, depending on the problems and particular circumstances, other persons can make themselves available. Thus without doubt the commitment of the **General Coordinator of Formation** (*SdA.M* nos. 212 and 432ff) continues, as his sphere of competence embraces all the formative activities (*SdA.M* no. 434). In the context of the apostolate, for example, also the one in-Charge of human resources can play a specific role, above all if he is a Pauline; but included also is the Pauline in-Charge of the apostolic or formative sector wherein the newly perpetually professed works. The latter, whether directly or indicating the urgency of it to the General Director of the Apostolate or to the Superior, can offer his contribution of support to the newly perpetually professed. What is important is that all those who fill up directorial positions include in their office those who are inserting themselves full time in any activity, and that they do it avoiding every form of paternalism, which is always counterproductive.

4. Modes of accompaniment

In order to organize the accompaniment the **Superior of the Circumscription and his Council** are to establish “councils of study” *ad hoc* (even availing of the collaboration of the General Coordinator of Formation) in the course of which they plan the work which they intend to carry out with the newly perpetually professed, taking into account their characteristics and their needs on the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral level.

Every six months they are to verify the progress of the accompaniment, even by means of personal meetings with the newly perpetually professed. They will be the ones (directly or

through others) to guarantee the accompaniment in the course of the five years.

The newly perpetually professed can be accompanied individually or in group: one thing are the common problems, another is, instead, that individual who often has to deal with the rise of new questions due to unexpected situations. In both cases the one who accompanies must not be surprised, but must draw from his experience, and with prudence help the newly perpetually professed.

4.1. Individual accompaniment – It is opportune that there be a person for reference (the superior or a person suggested by him) who may be able to receive the “confidences” of the newly perpetually professed and may be capable of reciprocating them with wisdom and patience. It is a question of communication that the newly perpetually professed must necessarily learn and assimilate because it will be an integrating part of his “pastorality.”

Often it is a matter of framing one’s apostolic commitment in a broader context which is not immediately identifiable: thus a circumscribed role and one that is apparently irrelevant is not such anymore if considered with respect to what precedes and what follows.

Often anticipated are relational matters and questions of interpersonal collaboration, meetings/collisions due to varying if not opposing characters: it is obvious that such “conflicts” cannot be resolved either through flight or through a permanent tension.

The new generation of Paulines must not only be familiar with the most modern means of communication; it must be above all capable of working as a group and in an effective way. This means that not only must it quickly resolve relational problems, but out of interpersonal relations must know how to seize all the positive elements and resources in function of the apostolate.

A person who has to deal with us, above all if he or she is lay, expects a supplement of humanity, patience, wisdom and all those things that are not learned overnight. It is necessary to be able and to know how to share hopes, joys and apostolic commitments related to ordinary life, to be available to meet all and to dialog with all.

In particular, the **Superior of the Circumscription** is to meet every three months each newly perpetually professed and evaluate with him his personal religious and apostolic project. The same thing the **General Director of the Apostolate** or the **General Coordinator of Formation** is to do, with particular attention to the apostolic area where the newly perpetually professed operates. Even the local Superior has to have this moment of encounter in order to know the progress in community life of the newly perpetually professed.

4.2. Accompanying a group – The small or big problems that every day assail the individual member must not allow him to forget what the *Constitutions and Directory* provide:

156.1. While every Pauline is to fulfil his daily tasks he is to consider it his duty to take advantage of all means available to continually update his formation at all levels: spiritual, communitarian, cultural, apostolic, pastoral.

“Taking advantage of all available means to continually update one’s formation” can be learned at a first time together with other newly perpetually professed confreres and through appropriate *stages*, following the style of the courses for *continuing formation*, always according to what the *Constitutions and Directory* say:

156.2. For that purpose, every circumscription is to establish a program of continuing formation that can be of benefit to all the members and every year to give notice to the General Government which must verify its constant realization.

156.3. Those in charge of the circumscriptions are to program, moreover, together with their communities, periodical courses of updating and renewal shared by all the members in a cyclical and institutionalized manner.

By means of similar encounters shared by the newly perpetually professed, it is possible to deepen the life of the religious in all its truth, keep updated his theological, spiritual and social communication knowledge, tying it with the requirements of the apostolate and of communitarian life without neglecting the wider context of the Pauline Family.

In particular, for the priests, it should not be forgotten that if the *Constitutions* affirm that: “**76.** Only by way of exception and for serious reasons the Congregation assumes the care of souls in the parishes...”, this must not be cause to forget what is said immediately after: “**76.1.** However, the members, out of true pastoral spirit, are to willingly lend a hand in ministry according to its opportunity and possibility, both within and without their own churches.” Which means that the young Pauline priests must have the ability to carry out such ministries: prepared, updated, assisted and eventually corrected. Our “communication expertise” cannot ignore liturgy and pastoral care.

5. Areas of accompaniment

The accompaniment must touch the specific “four wheels” of Fr. Alberione: piety, study, apostolate, poverty (cf *RF* 133), also in the terminology used by *RF* 133.1: “This terminology is expressed today through four dimensions of formation: for **sanctity** or **piety**, *spiritual formation*; for **study**, *intellectual* or *cultural formation*; for **apostolate**, *apostolic formation*; finally, for **poverty** (which involves right balance in evaluating earthly realities) *human formation*” (the order is adapted with regard to *RF*).

5.1. *Spiritual formation* – The **objective** is to live daily the Pauline spirituality and to let the apostolate absorb it.

The **Superior of the Circumscription and his government** are to elaborate a common project which includes retreats, Eucharistic celebrations, meditations for the newly perpetually professed; they are to meet and dialog with them to motivate them in living daily the Pauline spirituality. To that end can be selected a text of the Founder to be meditated in common. Penitential liturgies can be programmed. Yearly encounters for deepening can be organized.

The **newly perpetually professed** will have a personal project of spiritual life (study, apostolate and poverty) with indications that are clear and verifiable. They will meet punctually with the Superior of the Circumscription and with their spiritual Director. They will be assiduous in the life of piety of the community, in the yearly spiritual exercises and they will strengthen their spirit of piety.

5.2. Apostolic formation – The **objective** is to realize effectively their apostolate within the Pauline mission.

The **Superior of the Circumscription and the General Director of the Apostolate** are to elaborate a written apostolic profile for the newly perpetually professed, entrusting to them specific activities based on their specialization or abilities, in such a way that responsibilities and commitments can be verified. They are to organize, if necessary, moments of formation in the individual apostolic departments. The General Director of the Apostolate is to evaluate periodically the commitment of the religious in their apostolic department and to designate for them new tasks to evaluate their ability and increase their experience.

The **newly perpetually professed** will carry out with care his apostolic commitments. If a directorial task has been entrusted to him he will exercise it in an effective and correct way and he is to present doable projects that respond to the real needs of the recipients.

He will put to the test his ability to listen and to dialog and will correct eventual inclinations to act on impulse, to let himself be conditioned by sympathies and to operate in a superficial way. He will show himself responsible regarding things used for the apostolate.

5.3. Intellectual formation – The **objective** is to continue in ongoing formation so as to respond efficaciously and with competence to the needs of the apostolate.

The **Superior of the Circumscription and his government** are to program yearly meetings for the intellectual formation of the newly perpetually professed; they are to meet them periodically to know their eventual needs and verify their personal capacities in the apostolic activity. If they consider it opportune, they are to urge them to give conferences to the communities or to groups of formation.

The **newly perpetually professed** will follow attentively the organized meetings of formation. He will strive to keep alive and update his intellectual formation through readings, participation in courses and conferences. He will hold himself responsibly informed about contemporary society, culture, politics and economics. If a directorial task has been entrusted to him, he will do all to carry it out in the best way possible, updating himself and putting to good use his creativity.

5.4. Human formation – The **objective** is to be ever more aware of the importance of good management of the goods of the community and of the apostolate, of correct and fruitful rapport with others, of full maturation of one's person.

The **Superior of the Circumscription and the local Superior** are to educate the newly perpetually professed in the use and respect of the means made available by the community: premises, machines, objects for use, etc.; they are to furnish the necessary goods (medicine, clothing, etc.) without giving the idea of luxury or wealth, social privilege or other. They are to help the newly perpetually professed to have care for themselves, avoiding any type of excess. They are to meet them periodically so as to know their eventual needs.

The **newly perpetually professed** on his part will conscientiously pay attention to the goods

that the community places at his disposal, he will be responsible for them and will treat them with care. He will follow with shared attention the life of the community (schedules, meetings, etc.). He will respect scrupulously the community commitments that have been entrusted to him. He will always inform his superiors about his movements, above all when he has to leave the community.

6. Integrations

6.1 This ***Proposal of accompaniment of the newly perpetually professed Pauline religious during the first 5 years*** is a “proposal” and is to be understood as such. It is not and does not intend to be an additional document that steals space in some library. It is born out of valuing and integrating the ***Iter formativi*** that have reached the SIF for approval, and testifies with what attention and creativity they were read.

6.2 The SIF now expects that it be given value, and if there are some integrations or adaptations on the part of the individual Circumscriptions, it would be glad to receive information about them.

SIF

International Secretariat for Promotion and Formation

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Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist