

REPORT OF THE RECTOR MAJOR TO THE GC27: FORMATION DEPARTMENT

1. INITIAL SITUATION

The situation of formation at the beginning of the six-year period 2008-2014 has been drawn from the Report of the Rector Major to the GC26 and from the formation assessments found in the final document of the same GC26. These texts highlight four areas in need of intervention: the Salesian consecrated vocation, ongoing formation, initial formation, and coordination and collaboration. In the following description of the initial situation, we have taken into consideration only those objectives that were not achieved by the end of the previous six years, 2002-2008, and the new challenges that emerged.

The Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms

At the beginning of the six-year period, there was in the Congregation a weak idea of the Salesian consecrated vocation. Since its *identity* was not clear to everyone, there was an insufficient *identification* with it. The CG26 spoke of some Salesian priests displaying a generic approach in their pastoral work and partially embracing their Salesian identity; it also lamented the scarce knowledge and appreciation of the vocation of the Salesian Brother as a result of an inadequate understanding, presentation, formation and visibility of the figure of the Brother.

The basic problem was that consecrated life was not fully taken up as a choice made for life: oftentimes the Salesian charism was not lived within the specific perspective of a consecrated vocation. Particular aspects of Salesian consecrated life that proved difficult were the life of poverty and the spirit of community, both of which came under attack from a desire for comfort and from individualism. Obedience and chastity too found themselves in a similar situation. Important challenges also arose in connection with personal and social media, as they create a new culture and a new way of living.

Ongoing formation

The high number of departures of perpetually professed confreres from the Congregation - the dispensations from priestly celibacy, the secularizations and the dismissals - underlined the need to pay attention to *vocational fidelity*. The lack of fidelity, however, did not refer only to departures; there were also confreres who remained in the Congregation but lived a consecrated life that had lost its meaning because of their bourgeois mentality and lack of religious discipline. Difficulties were also experienced when Salesian priests and Brothers were fully inserted for the first time in apostolic activities after their ordination and perpetual profession, and the quinquennium did not always respond to their needs.

There was a noticeable weakness of the *role of the Rector* in communities and a slackening of the practice of the friendly talk and spiritual accompaniment. Confreres ran “the risk of dispersal and superficiality” (GC26 20) because of the failure to accept the grace of unity and maintain a balance in their spiritual life, community life and apostolic action. The need was felt to prevent forms of counter-witness and abuses regarding chastity.

There was an inadequate *mentality of ongoing formation* in individual confreres and an insufficient care of the local community’s daily life as the ordinary place for each one to grow in his vocation.

Provinces paid little attention to qualifying their confreres. The joint formation of Salesians and lay people was not given serious consideration, nor was the formation of the laity; however, it was not clear as to who was responsible for coordinating this formation.

Initial formation

There was a growing realization that initial formation cannot be an insulated reality, since it is strongly influenced by the life of a Province and its attentiveness to formation. The way the confreres and apostolic communities live their lives has a significant impact on candidates and young Salesians.

However, the biggest challenge of initial formation lay in the *methodology of formation*. In general, the process of personalization was not embraced by all. Formation was still understood as a compliance with norms and not as a maturing of convictions and attitudes: those who were in formation did not always take responsibility for their own growth, and their formation guides were not always able to get them to be responsible. In addition, there was a need to strengthen personal accompaniment, vocation discernment, the assessment of the authenticity of motivations, growth in human, affective and sexual maturity, personal prayer, the personal plan of life, and personal study and reflection. What was found missing was a mentality of accompaniment; the indications of the Ratio about the Rector of the formation community being the guide proposed to the confreres were not heeded; there was an overlapping of the friendly talk, spiritual accompaniment, psychological assistance and confession; the personal scrutinies (assessments) were not always appreciated as forms of accompaniment; it often happened that those who were in formation did not have a spiritual guide or they approached one only occasionally.

With regard to the *stages of formation*, a difficulty was experienced in ensuring a continuity and a gradual progression which together make for an effective formation process. The prenovitiate was not always taken seriously by the Provinces as the first real phase of formation, as a strong experience of Christian life and a journey towards human maturity, and as a time for getting to know the candidates' family background and past experience; not always did it turn out to be a phase of preparation for the consecrated life which the prenovices would begin to experience in the novitiate. The prenovitiate also lacked a close connection with the aspirantate experience. As for the stage of practical training, it was not properly conducted and often gave rise to a life-style of individualism and activism.

On the *intellectual front*, there was a lowering of the intellectual level in the Congregation. Salesian study centres needed to be cared for: they needed decisions to be taken by those in authority, and they also needed to be accompanied not only by academic authorities, but especially by religious authorities at various levels: the Rector, the Provincial, and the "Curatorium". The study curricula were sometimes weak or incomplete in essential areas, especially in philosophy and pedagogy. In many Salesian study centres and formation communities, the programme of Salesian studies was still not fully carried out in a systematic way and within an academic framework. The number of qualified teachers was inadequate. As for students, there was a perceptible lack of personalization of their studies; in other words, they showed a passive attitude, a lack of interest, weak initiative, poor motivation, and a mentality that considered philosophical subjects peripheral to their Salesian vocation and mission.

Coordination and cooperation at different levels

Even if the role of the *Provincial Formation Delegate* was better understood and implemented, the Delegate did not always find his position strengthened and the stability in his role assured, nor did he have the means and the time needed to effectively animate formation in the Province; as a result,

there was a noticeably weak capacity for reflection on formation in the Provinces. The *Regional Formation Commissions* did a good job over the past six years; they ensured a forward movement together with the whole Congregation, but there was little clarity about how to advance on the regional level. In the Congregation, both the mentality and the practice of *interprovincial collaboration* in the field of formation grew; similarly, there was an improvement in the functioning of the “Curatorium”; but there was a need to strengthen these processes, and there still remained significant opportunities for collaboration, like, for instance, the establishment of interprovincial formation teams.

2. CONTRIBUTION OF THE SIX-YEAR PLAN OF ANIMATION AND GOVERNMENT

Starting out from the initial situation described above, the six-year plan of animation and government drew up lines of action for the Formation Sector in the same four areas already mentioned.

The Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms

The six-year plan spelt out the way to present the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms: we ought to begin with the *common elements* of Salesian consecrated life, then pass on to speak of the richness found in each of its two *specific forms*, and finally conclude with their *complementarity*.

With regard to the *oneness* of the Salesian consecrated vocation, the plan sought to bolster the common elements in all Salesians - in initial and in ongoing formation. It asked for the identity of the Salesian consecrated life and its two forms to be made known to aspirants and postulants.

The plan also chose to strengthen *the specificity of the two figures* in formation communities and advocated regional conferences and seminars on the Salesian priest and the Salesian Brother. For what concerns the Salesian Brother in particular, it sought a renewed commitment to his vocation and a robust programme of initial formation for him.

Finally, it urged Provincial Formation Commissions to discuss the way in which the *complementarity of the two forms* of the Salesian consecrated vocation ought to be lived, and invited the Provinces to involve Salesian Brothers not only in administrative but also in educative and pastoral roles.

Ongoing formation

The six-year plan resolved to strengthen the *vocational fidelity* of confreres in their communities and Provinces, and asked the Formation Department to offer a reflection on the subject. It announced its intention of fostering the faithful practice of the friendly talk with the Rector and spiritual accompaniment and of developing together with the Provinces formation programmes to promote prayer, apostolic passion, a pastoral mentality, obedience, poverty, chastity and affective maturity.

Aware of the need to create a *mentality of ongoing formation* in the Congregation, the plan focused on strengthening the individual responsibility of each confrere for growing in his vocation through a personal plan of life, and on the responsibility of communities for the formation of their members through a community plan, the “community day” and an annual plan. It sought to promote Salesian

studies and the study of the Constitutions in the Provinces and to improve the manner of conducting the spiritual retreat and accompanying the quinquennium.

Since the success of these initiatives of ongoing formation depends on a serious preparation of the confreres responsible for them and a better *coordination* of their efforts, the plan zeroed in on the formation of Rectors and the qualification of personnel, especially of formation guides and of those who would have to animate Salesian topics and the study of the Constitutions in the Provinces; it also felt that the time had come for a reflection in Regional Commissions on experiences of joint formation of Salesians and lay people.

Initial formation

The plan sought to foster the *methodology of personalization*. It focused on initiatives to bring about a change of attitude in formation guides and to help those in formation to take responsibility for their own formation. It asked the Formation Department to offer guidelines on personal accompaniment and ensure the application of the criteria of vocation discernment. Finally, it called upon each Province to develop a strategy to overcome the fragility of vocations.

The plan recommended that care be taken of the aspirantate, the prenovitiate, practical training and the preparation for perpetual profession in order to provide for the smooth functioning and continuity of the *stages of formation*, which has always been a preoccupation. It asked formation communities to draw up their formation plan, and the Regions to provide various ways of ensuring continuity between the phases of formation.

Since some *formation programmes* needed attention, the plan asked for an audit of the study curricula to ensure the implementation of the prescribed programme of Salesian studies in all the stages of formation and reinforce the pastoral dimension of the studies. It also requested the Regional and Provincial Commissions and formation communities to discuss the practice of poverty, prepare a formation programme for growth to emotional and sexual maturity and consecrated chastity, and reflect on formation to social communication and a vigilant and positive use of the media.

With a view to providing the qualified *formation personnel* that would be needed to carry out all these proposals, the plan asked the Formation Department to make particular Provinces aware of the weakness of their formation teams, stir up in formation personnel the need to continue forming themselves, take steps to enhance their formation, guarantee qualified and stable formation teams in formation communities, and ensure that an annual meeting was held in each Region for the formation of formation guides.

Coordination and cooperation at different levels

This part of the plan was directed towards promoting in each Province greater coordination and cooperation in formation through a better definition and a strengthening of the roles and tasks of the *Provincial Formation Delegate and the Provincial Formation Commission*; it also envisaged greater collaboration among the various Delegates involved in the animation of the Province.

The plan sought to give a greater impetus to *interprovincial collaboration*, particularly to their shared responsibility for formation communities and study centres with the help of an interprovincial Curatorium, interprovincial formation teams and intercultural experiences. It chose to support initiatives of regional or interprovincial collaboration, such as the formation for perpetual profession and the formation of Rectors.

Finally, it strove to promote forms of *regional linkage* to strengthen collaboration between the Region and the Formation Department by continuing the annual meeting of the Regional Formation

Commission with the presence of the Department. It decided to ask the regional formation centres to pay more attention to Salesian studies and spiritual accompaniment.

3. OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED

The Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms

As we look back at what has been done over the past years to put the six-year plan for formation into practice, we realize, first of all, that there is already a movement under way to foster a better understanding and promotion of the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms.

There has been a growing understanding of the *identity* of the Salesian consecrated vocation in the wake of the impulse given by the GC26 to Salesian identity, the reflections offered by the Rector Major on consecrated life, the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, and the work begun on the theme of living the radical nature of the Gospel. The Provinces have been helped to draw up their Provincial Formation Plan, starting out from a profile of the Salesian they need to form and taking into account the indications found in the GC26. The materials prepared by the Formation Department and distributed for use in aspirantates and prenovitiates have helped candidates to understand a Salesian's true identity, which is that of a person consecrated to God after the example of the Lord Jesus and following the example of service to the young set by Don Bosco.

With the common identity of the Salesian consecrated vocation as the starting-point, it has been possible to arrive at a better understanding of the *specificity* of the two forms of vocation in the Congregation, the ministerial and the lay. In fact, the vocation of the Salesian Brother has received considerable attention in the past six years with the revision of the "Ratio" concerning his formation and the opportunity of a two-year specific formation offered to all Salesian Brothers after practical training.

Finally, we have begun to understand the need for a better exploration and examination of how to realize on the operational level the *complementarity* and *reciprocity* between the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation.

Ongoing formation

After the study of vocational fragility, guidelines have been offered in the past six years on *vocational fidelity* (AGC 410), and these have been the subject of personal reflection and community sharing in different Provinces. This exercise has helped the confreres to rediscover the gift of their vocation and respond daily to its needs; at the same time, it has goaded the Provinces into finding ways of preventing confreres from abandoning consecrated life and addressing the failings of religious discipline. The attention given to fidelity, like the concern shown for the identity of the Salesian consecrated vocation, is a process that has just begun. To promote fidelity, some Regional Commissions have embarked on a study and an animation of the friendly talk with the Rector and spiritual accompaniment.

To foster a *mentality of ongoing formation*, the practice of drawing up a community plan of life has continued and even been reinforced; likewise, the practice of the "community day" has made an entry into all Provinces. Interest has grown in the care and accompaniment of the confreres of the quinquennium. Several events of the past six years, like the visit of Don Bosco's relic, the anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, the celebration of the centenary of the death of Fr. Rua, and the triennial period of preparation for the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco have all

served as incentives to study and communicate “Salesianity” to confreres, communities and Provinces.

Initiatives for the formation of *formation guides for ongoing formation* have continued; care has been taken in Provinces or in groups of Provinces to form Rectors, particularly new Rectors. The regional centres of continuing formation have sent useful materials to the communities and have offered opportunities for ongoing formation to confreres and Provinces. Steps have been taken to stir up interest in qualifying the confreres.

Initial formation

There is in formation communities a greater focus on the *personalization of formation* in so far as those who are in formation are being helped to take responsibility for growing in their vocation and formation guides are becoming more aware of their duty to make their charges more responsible; this is also reflected in the better use that is being made of the personal plan of life. Since personalization is also fostered by personal accompaniment, the Formation Department has studied the problems encountered in this area with a view to making the practice more effective. Personalization has also received a boost from the articulation of formation communities in groups according to courses and in groups for purposes of animation and more direct involvement in the management and activities of the house.

Priority has been given to some *stages of formation*. The revision of the “Ratio” concerning the prenovitiate has helped to focus more attention on this stage. Likewise, the joint guidelines of the Formation and Youth Ministry Departments have stimulated a process of renewal of the aspirantate and of vocation animation. In these early stages of the formation process, considerable space has been given to the dynamics of human maturity, discernment, a deeper formation in faith, and a more systematic approach to the reality of vocational fragility. To make practical training a true phase of formation, greater attention has been paid to providing personal accompaniment and holding meetings with practical trainees. Finally, the preparation for perpetual profession has received a better follow-up in the different regions with the help of interprovincial initiatives.

At provincial level some *formation programmes* are being revised, following the guidelines laid down by the Rector Major and the General Council. Intellectual formation is now better defined in its vocational and formation objectives, curricula, teaching and learning methods, Salesian studies, the study of pastoral theology and the preparation of teachers. Mention must be made of the commitment of the Regions to formulate programmes for growth in sexual and emotional maturity and formation to consecrated chastity – all this as a response to the letter of the Rector Major, “The vine and the branches” (AGC 408) and the subsequent guidelines issued by the Councillor for Formation. In collaboration with the Missions Department, programmes for the missionary formation of confreres have been laid out - at the level of initial, specific and ongoing formation.

There has been some beefing-up of *formation teams*, also as a result of interprovincial collaboration. Following the guidelines of the Councillor for Formation (AGC 404), many Provinces now pay more attention to the formation of formation personnel, starting with an annual meeting of formation guides in all the Regions; at these regional meetings there is an effort made to achieve greater continuity and coordination between the various stages of formation. All this represents a beginning, the initial inertia has been overcome, and we are moving in the right direction.

Collaboration in formation at different levels

An important figure for reflection, planning, evaluation, coordination and animation of formation in the Province is the *Provincial Formation Delegate*, assisted by his *Commission*. The Delegate and

his Commission are becoming more aware of their role; they are doing their share of animation of the Province and becoming more effective. A fruit of this process is the Provincial Formation Plan prepared at the beginning of the six-year period in most of the Provinces.

Interprovincial collaboration is a choice which is not only considered a necessity but is increasingly becoming a conviction, especially with regard to formation communities. Many interprovincial communities have been set up in the various stages of formation, from the novitiate to specific formation, and in some cases also the prenovitiate. In several of them the “Curatorium” functions as an expression of shared responsibility; interprovincial teams of formation personnel too have been established. Other forms of interprovincial collaboration are taking shape or being strengthened, like the formation of Rectors, the preparation for perpetual profession, and the ongoing formation of confreres.

In all Regions, *Regional Formation Commissions* have become a well-established reality, with a regular meeting of all the Provincial Delegates held every year. Through the Regional Coordinator they maintain a good dialogue with the Formation Department and are becoming increasingly aware of inculturating formation in the Region and in the Provinces. The establishment of the *Regional Centre for Ongoing Formation* in Quito has been a positive development; it is at the service of the two regions of America, and offers rich and varied formation programmes, especially in Salesian studies; it keeps up a good dialogue with the Formation Department.

4. OBJECTIVES NOT ACHIEVED

The Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms

While recognizing the progress made over the past six years in several areas of formation, some weaknesses or gaps still remain. Despite our efforts, there is still a long way to go to bring everyone to understand that the Salesian’s fundamental *identity* lies in his consecrated life, or putting it in other words, that he is primarily and essentially a consecrated person sent by God to serve young people through his priestly/diaconal ministry or through his lay service. This theme has not been an object of theological reflection or of seminars or conferences, as recommended by the six-year plan. The profile of the Salesian to be formed today, both in initial and in ongoing formation, has received attention when drafting the Provincial Formation Plan, but it does not seem to have had much impact on the lives of confreres, communities and Provinces.

With regard to the *specificity* of the two forms, a deeper study of the identity of the Salesian priest remains an urgent need since priestly ministry often tends to eclipse Salesian consecrated life. Some Regions experience a certain lethargy when it comes to thinking and acting on the lay Salesian consecrated vocation because of a big fall in the number of Salesian Brothers and a reduced number of young confreres embracing this vocation. The promotion of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation meets with some difficulty in vocation animation and in the discernment which is to be done in the prenovitiate and the novitiate; we are often called upon to make a discernment of candidates whose culture or Church tradition leads them to choose Salesian life in view of becoming priests; we need a better understanding of their culture and context to overcome this clerical mentality.

As for the *complementarity* of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation, no reflection has taken place on the concrete ways of realizing it; likewise, not much has been done to make the Salesian Brother stand out in educational settings, and this fact underlines all the more the need to provide him with a professional qualification.

Ongoing formation

Vocational fidelity is still a problem, considering the increasing number of departures from the Congregation and the counter-witness of some confreres in the matter of religious discipline. There is still no evidence of a significant recovery of the friendly talk with the Rector and spiritual accompaniment; instead, we notice a weakening of the role of the Rector in communities and a lack of preparation of confreres to be spiritual guides. A deeper reflection on poverty has not taken place, in spite of its being asked for by the GC26, and formation programmes have not been worked out on the subject of obedience and on the vital relationship between prayer and work. We still struggle to get confreres to continue the practice of the personal plan of life after completing the stages of initial formation; this is because they have a weak sense of personal responsibility for growing in their vocation.

Not much has been done to help confreres assume a *mentality of ongoing formation*. We could say, on the whole, that we lack a systematic reflection as a Congregation on this particular reality and its relationship to initial formation. The increasing reduction in the number of confreres in communities and the multiplicity of their tasks are diluting efforts to make the daily life of the community more formative, and lessening interest in specific occasions of ongoing formation; in particular, the practice of meditation remains weak. In general, there is a noticeable lack of the ability to reflect; we tend to embark on activities rather than bring about change.

The *coordination of ongoing formation* has not yet been realized; as of now, this formation consists of various initiatives and experiences, but not a step-by-step formation process. We have not broached the issue of animators and formation guides for ongoing formation. With regard to the joint formation of Salesians and lay people, little has been done to organize and circulate information about positive experiences. The plan for the qualification of confreres is not yet a part of the formation strategies of some Provinces. The government of a Province has much to do with formation, but if there are no motivations and convictions that lead it to take courageous decisions in the area of the daily life of confreres and communities, there will be laudable efforts but no genuine process of change; more effective action, for instance, is required to form Salesian communities that are more consistent in both quality and quantity.

Initial formation

The *personalization of formation*, as a mentality and a methodology to be assumed by formation guides and those who are in formation, is at the beginning stage; there is still a long way to go to do away with a formation model that leads to conformity, formality, superficiality and sometimes fear. One of the symptoms of a lack of personalization is a loss of motivation during the formation process: if the plan of life, meditation and personal prayer slacken after the first few years of formation, it means that these practices have not taken root in the heart, and that formation has not reached the person: it is more “information” than “transformation”. A culture of personal accompaniment has not yet fully matured in formation communities. Weak accompaniment entails weak discernment, and this is especially noticeable in aspirantates and prenovitiates, which are among the most important periods of vocational discernment. As a result of a weak personalization, we find that an effective response has yet to be found to the challenges posed by vocational fragility and the many dropouts during the period of temporary profession.

As regards the *stages of formation*, both the time of vocation promotion and the phase of the aspirantate remain weak; the final stretch of this six-year period has seen a decline in the number of vocations; even the prenovitiate still needs strengthening. In addition, there is weak communication between contiguous stages of formation, and the continuity of formation remains distinctly problematic.

An assessment of the *formation processes* shows that the formation to poverty envisaged by the six-year plan has not materialized. Pastoral formation in the different stages of formation, and especially during specific formation, has not yet been taken into consideration, also because the conclusions of the process of rethinking youth ministry are still awaited. Similarly, the Formation Department has not updated the existing guidelines regarding social communication, especially with regard to personal and social media because it awaits an Instruction from the Congregation for Catholic Education. Though the programmes of Salesian studies have been spelt out, the quality of what is offered and studied has grown very little. Finally, there is a realization that formation in the faith is still weak, especially in the first stages of the formation process.

Other weaknesses too remain in connection with *formation teams*, especially in those Provinces which have not invested in interprovincial collaboration. Not enough care has been taken to choose suitable confreres for the service of formation, and likewise there is an insufficient commitment to preparing formation personnel. The formation of formation guides is not a very widespread reality at provincial level and in the formation teams of formation communities.

Collaboration in formation at different levels

Despite the progress achieved in making known the figure of the Provincial Formation *Delegate*, some Provinces have not fully understood his role; particularly when he is the Rector of a formation community, the effectiveness of his service remains limited. The Provincial Formation *Commissions* are generally weak in their ability to reflect; they tend mostly to organize and implement initiatives or to limit themselves to carrying out the tasks asked of them by the Region and the Formation Department. Oftentimes there is no connection between animation and the government of the Province. Cooperation between formation and youth ministry is yet to be extended to other areas of provincial animation.

There is a widespread awareness that a Province by itself cannot discharge several of its formation responsibilities; that is why the beginning of numerous forms of *interprovincial collaboration* is changing the pattern of self-sufficiency of the Provinces in the area of formation. This situation needs to be reviewed to ensure a greater involvement of the Congregation in fostering those processes of renewal, growth and coordination whose implementation does not come easily. There are still some formation communities and study centres that could benefit from interprovincial collaboration; in this matter we sometimes meet with resistance.

The *Regional Commissions* are yet to find a more effective way of involving the Provinces and establishing an organic relationship with Provincial Conferences; their reflection and stimulus often risk being excluded from acts of government. They have to find out how to foster the study of languages in the various Regions. A reflection is also needed on the regional formation centres with regard to their responsibilities, their manner of functioning, possible synergies, and their link with the Formation Department and Provincial Conferences.

5. NEW CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

The unachieved objectives of the past six years have already highlighted the areas of formation we need to work on in the coming years. At the same time, some new problems need to be addressed and some matters call for attention; here are the new challenges and perspectives in the area of formation, which were not part of the previous six-year plan.

The Salesian consecrated vocation

In the first place, the vocation to Salesian consecrated life today and in the near future cannot but engage more decisively in a *confrontation with present-day culture*; it must be able to form confreres to live the radical nature of the Gospel authentically in a world pervaded by secularization, globalization and postmodernity. For this we need a better understanding and a clearer presentation of the *identity of the Salesian priest and the Salesian Brother* and the complementarity of their vocations. We have to *continue paying attention to vocational fragility and fidelity*, even while we try to instil a sense of vocation and a sense of belonging to the Congregation right from the beginning.

Ongoing formation

Already in initial formation we have to create *a mentality of ongoing formation* and a willingness to grow in our vocation by allowing ourselves to be accompanied by God through historical situations and human mediations: we have to make good use of the friendly talk with the Rector and spiritual accompaniment. Already during specific formation we have to ensure that our confreres are given a *preparation for leadership* and the service of authority; subsequently, during ongoing formation we have to be more assiduous in providing a good *formation for Rectors* in the Provinces or in groups of Provinces and creating conditions in our communities that will make it easier for Rectors to perform their duties effectively. At the same time, we must ensure that the various elements making up the life of a community turn it into a *place of ongoing formation*, viz. quantitative and qualitative consistency, work proportionate to the mission of the community...

Initial formation

Initial formation must be *personalized*, i.e. assumed by each one in formation as his personal responsibility in collaboration with the Spirit who forms from within; this presupposes that there are consistent formation teams that are prepared and able to use appropriate methods for accompanying their charges personally, forming their hearts and helping them to form their own convictions. One of our priorities must be to give our charges a strong foundation in the *faith* right from the first stages of formation, especially in terms of a personal relationship with Jesus, and inculcate in them a readiness to do God's will. Special attention must be devoted to the *pastoral formation* of those who are in formation so that they are rendered capable of reflection and pastoral planning, engage in a joint formation with the laity, embark on experiences of spiritually guiding youth and lay people, and prepare themselves for the new evangelization. There is also a need for a formative and pastoral approach to *social communication*, and in particular, to personal media, the social networks and virtual relationships.

Coordination and cooperation at different levels

We feel the need today for a collaboration between Provinces and in the Regions for a solid formation of all *personnel engaged in tasks of direction and animation*, viz. Provincials, Rectors and *Provincial Formation Delegates*. In particular, the role of the Provincial Formation Delegate must be reinforced in the Provinces. The present circumstances also require *new partnerships* between Provinces in the area of both initial and ongoing formation. And at the regional level, it is necessary to draw help from the Provincial Conference and the Regional Formation Commission when deciding on the qualification of personnel and making other strategic decisions.