



**Religious of Mary Immaculate  
Claretian Missionary Sisters**

**GENERAL PLAN  
OF FORMATION**



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## **RELIGIOUS OF MARY IMMACULATE CLARETIAN MISSIONARY SISTERS**

Rome 2007



## **Presentation**

With joy we present the publication of the General Plan of Formation, renovated as requested by the XIV and XV General Chapter. It has been studied and approved by the General Council on March 12<sup>th</sup> of 2007.

In its pages we will find some contents and orientations to keep our missionary life on the way of permanent formation. Therefore it is, an indispensable reading in any stage of the life we are.

We are happy to give it in the beginning of the celebration of the 200 anniversary of our Father Founder's, San Antonio María Claret, birth. To Him and to the Mother Founder María Antonia Paris we commend our formative and vocational paths.

*General Governance*

## HISTORY

The Church has asked Religious Institutes to elaborate their own Plan of Formation<sup>1</sup> **responding to the necessities of the Church** and the circumstances of the present moment.

Our Congregation also made this request in the XII General Chapter<sup>2</sup>, **so that formation be considered an ongoing process which takes place throughout one's whole life and includes all the dimensions of the person.** The XIV and XV General Chapter reflected extensively on the subject of formation and invited us to adapt the Plan of Formation to the present reality. (Cf. XV Gen. Chap. Issue 5)

The present General Plan of Formation (GPF) has been elaborated following a long process that started in 1979.

In the First General Encounter of Formation (Rome, 1979), the formators of the different Entities of the Congregation elaborated a Plan for the First Stages, taking as its basis the Documents of the IX General

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. CIC 650. 659; PI 4; VC 68.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. XII Gen Chap. N. 48.

Chapter (called Special Chapter) and what was said by the X General Chapter<sup>3</sup>.

The II General Encounter of Formation (Rome, 1986), dealt mainly with Permanent Formation, since formation during the first stages was already well organized. This Encounter also set guidelines to help to plan this long period of formation.

In the III General Encounter of Formation (Rome, 1992), the General Plan was completed. Materials from previous Encounters were reworked to include changes from the updated Constitutions, the Directory, and what was requested by the successive General Chapters. Church documents were also included in the text, specially the Document of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, "Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes" (PI). Using the work of the IV Encounter of Formation (Barcelona, 1997), some notes and commentaries were introduced in the Plan. The text was then published and sent to all the communities and formation houses.

**That Plan has served until the present time as a guide to formation planning** during Postulancy, Novitiate and Juniorate in the different Entities of the Congregation.

During the successive encounters -General Encounter of Prefects of Formation in October of 2001 and the Formators' Encounter in October 2002-

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. IX Gen. Chap. FO 114.

the Plan has been revised. Modifications and suggestions have been added based on the light shed by the last ecclesial documents (*Vita Consacrata, Congregavit nos in Unum, Starting afresh from Christ*) and experiences shared in different occasions. The result is the present General Plan of Formation.





## What IS THE GPF FOR?

1. The General Plan of Formation is geared, first of all, to each Claretian Missionary Sister. Formation is a task and permanent attitude that is to last our entire life (Cf. SAC 16; Const 101). All of us are in process of constant formation and all, somehow, are formators. The text offers pedagogical contents that reflect the richness of the Charism and ways that lead to its historical incarnation in each one of us who form the Congregation. It can be a worthwhile instrument for our programs and individual and community evaluations, and also as a motivation for our personal growth and assessment.

2. It is a basic instrument for **all who collaborate directly in the formation task**: formators, formation teams and formandees. It must be meditated individually and as teams frequently. Its concrete application in each entity and culture will be reflected in the provincial or local Plans of Formation.

3. It wants to be a basis and guide to program and evaluate the activities of **the Major Entities** (Cf. Dir. 118).

**Each Entity will adapt the Plan of Formation to its local reality.**



# **1. ANALYSIS OF REALITY**

Here are some general characteristics we think are present and affect us wherever we are. They have to be concretized in each Entity. At the time of applying the Plan in each Entity, it is important to start from an accurate knowledge of reality based on a political, social, and ecclesial analysis. When it comes to formation, the fundamental structures of life acquire a great importance: the family, patterns of relationships, and the religiosity typical of each culture, without ignoring those that have greater influence in the idiosyncrasy.

## **1.1. THE WORLD**

We are undergoing the change of time, immersed in a world full of contrasts in ideas, forms of life, social, political and economical structures. This world, that is getting to be a global village, promotes and generates a new type of person, relations, and value system. These great contrasts surround the hemisphere. On one hand, there is an appreciation for human values and on the other, acts of inhumanity continue to be committed. There is a growing capacity for critical analysis and search for values of the spirit; yet, some do not find meaning in life.

Accelerated changes prevail at all levels of life.

Ecological sensitivity and respect for life have become stronger in some areas; but in contrast, there is a programmed destruction of natural resources. Technological progress and mass media offer a wealth of cognitive and relational possibilities with the risk of superficiality.

The struggle for the equality of women has gained strength. Nevertheless, women are used in many cases oppressively and at the service of consumerism. In the same way, while contact between men and women is common, given the plural and participative context of modern life, affection is often confused with sensuality, undervaluing one of the greatest wealth of the human being.

The family continues to be an important centre of society, although affected by reorganizing processes. One notices an increasing disintegration, due in some cases to the lack of resources and excess of work, in others due to migration, or because of lack of values.

Consumerist society foments the increase in poverty and exclusion of most of humanity. This leads, in some cases, to a greater social awareness and a resurging of nongovernmental organizations in favor

of justice. In others it leads to an attitude of impotence, indifference and passivity.

The "new economy" has taken over the world-wide situation and imposes its blind pace through a neo-liberal political agenda that instead of being the art of co-existence has become, in most cases, a race for power and possessions. The unjust distribution of resources and the exclusion of some sectors of the population from public life, at the national as well as international levels, produce misery, increasing violence, destruction and migratory movements.

The increasing phenomenon of migration, changes the face of our societies and ecclesial communities, threatening cultural identity, tolerance and unity. Parallel to the process of globalization and universal communication, the movements in defence of local identities arise with greater power, sometimes reaching a level of fanaticism.

Progress in bioethics and cybernetics opens new possibilities for the human being, creating more and more a sense of uncontrolled dominion over the use of science.

The new century and millennium is marked by the presence of violence (war, terrorism, market demands) which creates insecurity. There is a growing hope-filled need to increase efforts in building peace and justice.

This entire situation is asking of us, as Claretian Missionary Sisters, generosity to live in a prophetic way, both in our individual style of life and our solidarity with those who are poor; as well as in the way in which we live in community and carry out the service of animation.

Religious life is called to be a "Parable of the Kingdom of God". Great creativity is requested of us to bring about an alternative way of life in contexts where words have lost their value; also, there is a need for creativity to display new forms of dialogue, to search for consensus, evangelical fraternity, respect for life and to nurture that which is authentically human as the best platform for what is Christian (VC 85).

## **1. 2. THE CHURCH**

As it enters the new millennium, the Church sets out to start afresh from Christ (NMI 29). The Church is communion and participation. This enriching plurality -being inserted as Congregation in various local churches- requests that we promote profound unity and ecumenical openness in very different situations. (NMI 43)

The Church assumes evangelization in the present world with creativity, relying on the strength of the Spirit, the Word of God and the testimony of life of the believers. This brings in itself a shared

commitment integrating the different vocations of the People of God and our capacity to dialogue with non-believers. (NMI 54)

In the encounter with diverse cultures and different ways of practicing faith, the Church, with renewed dynamism, takes the path of inculturation, understanding it as the only valid form of presence and proclamation of the Gospel. (VC 79)

There are abounding signs of vitality in the life of the Church: greater prominence of laity, re-emergence of associations and movements, growing commitment to the poor and outcast. The tendency to respect multiply perspectives is at times constrained by desires of uniformity and separation from the reality of the world. It is also true that consecrated life does not receive due appreciation and it is undervalued in its deepest sense. (Cf. SAC 12. 13)

The Church faces the challenge of the young world affected by the socio-political situation where fragmentation, difficulty to assume lasting commitments, and affective disequilibrium hinder the maturation process and therefore, the process of formation.

In most latitudes, like yeast in the dough, the Church is a minority social group making an effort to promote and be an agent of religious and ecumenical dialogue.

As it faces the new millennium, the Church makes a call to live Christian spirituality from a renewed way of life in communion and committed to concrete charity, surpassing all types of fanaticism and religious integrism. (NMI 42. 49)

In this context we feel the urgency to live our Charism of renewal of the Church.

### **1.3 THE FORMATION IN THE CONGREGATION**

A great formative effort is evident in the Institute from its beginnings, as an important element indicated by the Founders in view of their concern for the permanent renewal of Consecrated Life.

After Second Vatican Council, this formative dynamism has been reinforced by the directives of the Council. The General Chapters, as of 1969, have insisted and given fundamental guidelines on this subject.

The post-conciliar phase has fostered a deepening and development of our congregational identity through spirituality studies on the M. Foundress, the documentation presented for her Process of Beatification and the History of the Institute,.

The General Plan of Formation, elaborated in successive stages, is recognized and valued as a



reference and aid at the time of planning formation in different Entities and houses of formation.

In the processes of formation all the dimensions of the person and the Claretian Charism are being taken into account to foster an integral growth process. Nevertheless, there is a need to continue working on it.

There is an emphasis on personalized formation beginning with the first stages. This approach to formation offers guidelines to help progressively to integrate one's personal history, culture, social reality with the experience of the Charism.

We are aware of the necessity of permanent formation. However, we are lacking motivation and interest to maintain alive the practice of the self-formation, mainly when there is lack of balance between prayer, work and rest. The practice of the Personal Project has been well received as a means of responsible self-formation.

The provincial encounters of formation are valued as a helpful tool to promote formation and fraternal life; although, in some cases, there is lack of attendance.

There is awareness that the community is the first and habitual place of continued formation; nevertheless, in our community planning, the formation section is sometimes ignored due to lack of organization or interest and is not always evaluated.

Our apostolic spirituality is profound and joyful; an interest is perceived to impregnate it with more contents of the Charism and to incarnate it more in today's world. (Cf. XV Gen. Chap. Issue 1)

There is a growing sensitivity and awareness of our responsibility with respect to the needs of the local Church and world problems. There is a perceived need to improve our faith-based and missionary reading of the reality that surrounds us.

There are efforts to offer a more suitable preparation to the Formators to help them to carry out their mission, but we still need more of it at congregational level. (XV Gen. Chap. Issue 3)

**Today's complex reality, not only affects, but it forms the young person in all the dimensions of his/her identity. For that reason, we insist on the necessity of making a lengthy analysis of the reality in each place. This will help us to define better the suitable objectives and adequate means to respond to the needs of formation. It is important to review periodically our understanding of reality and mainly of the young world and its changes.**

In general, there are still some challenges in Formation, according to the characteristics presented,:

- The need of accompaniment of the candidate, previous to the entrance in the Institute. Selection and discernment of suitability and maturity of those wishing to enter the Congregation.
- The importance of human aspects, from the beginning, for a maturity process in personal consistency, fraternal relations, and apostolic commitment.
- The convenience of accompaniment during all the stages of religious life. Support for the sisters, who after the initial stages, are sent to the communities.
- A Christocentric formation anchored in what is essential, forged in the love of the Spirit, who leads us to incarnate the attitudes of Jesus.
- Necessity to constantly revise our way of living the discipleship of Jesus in front of the big problems of poverty, injustice and world insecurity.
- Necessity of the preparation of the sisters for personal accompaniment in different stages.
- Cultural and apostolic pluralism in front of the increasing differentiation of apostolic fronts and geographical areas where we evangelize.
- Indispensable preparation to share with other congregations and vocations in the Church.

- The necessity of appropriate options for the ongoing formation of our elderly sisters.



## 2. PRINCIPLES OF THE CLARETIAN FORMATION

### 2.1. Pedagogical aspects

The nucleus of all religious formation is the determined vital option for Christ, in answer to his call that, animated by the Spirit, leads to an increasing radical commitment to the Gospel, expressed in the consecration and total dedication to the service of the Kingdom of God.

From an **anthropological** point of view, personal growth never ends; the process of growth is ongoing. It is a fact that takes place in the experience of relationships and openness to change.

From a **theological** point of view, consecrated life is in itself never ending formation as participation in the action of the Father who, by means of the Spirit, instills in the heart of the called the sentiments of the Son. (Cf. VC 66) This journey is gradual, includes the person in its totality and lasts all life. (Cf. SAC 15)

From a **pedagogical** point of view, this process is translated into a formative itinerary that includes all the dimensions of life and goes across the successive stages of personal maturation until death. (Cf. VC 65) It is structured in successive stages, which are considered steps of an open process and

the space to gradually develop a freedom that allows us to consciously assume one's own reality and the demands of discipleship. Each stage does not end in itself for there exists an internal dynamics and connection among them. In order to design a formative experience that can be evaluated, it is necessary to know what the starting point is, what objectives are being accomplished, and what we hope to achieve in a certain period of time.

For the Claretian Missionary Sister at the service of the New Evangelization REALITY is the **departure point** of the formation itinerary:

- the reality of the society and the Church that surrounds us with the characteristics of each culture, with its increasing need for the proclamation of a living Christ,
- the reality of the Congregation with its heritage - rooted in a historical journey- and present search processes,
- the reality of each person who, moved by the gratuitous initiative of the Lord, begins the experience of discipleship in the spirit of the Charism. (Cf. Const. 73; Dir. 118)

The **purpose** of this proposal of itinerary is not static, nor is its objective linked to chronological stages, but aims to maintain alive and always new our response to the missionary call; that is, to maintain the person in a permanent attitude of formation with the purpose of living one's vocation like a new gift each day.

The **methodology** is based on the one Jesus used with his disciples: to accompany with the word, to put it into practice in the mission and to evaluate it. This journey is a journey of faith that implies that we adhere to the person of Jesus with a progressive assimilation of his priorities and lifestyle. It is communitarian and non-individualistic formation.

In the initial stage of formation, the integral and integrating process implies greater participation and commitment on the part of the congregational community, which offers the appropriate means, and is committed to accompany the formandee in her discernment, by living in fraternity for the mission of announcing the Kingdom of God according to our charism in the Church. Openness in faith to the action of the Spirit in the people and in the history is necessary on the part of the formandee and congregational community. The Provincial and local Project of formation will concretize in a pedagogical form this process. The following should be taken into account:

- ♦ the value and potentialities of each concrete person
- ♦ the dynamics of the group or community
- ♦ an updated analysis of the local social reality where the formation is set
- ♦ the insertion in the local Church
- ♦ the concrete experience of mission as source of formation

- ♦ the faith and the spirituality that animates all life
- ♦ the Congregation and its charism within the Church.

## **2.2. To form like Jesus formed**

Each one of us who constitutes the Congregation participates in the formation task. To be a formator and a missionary is a way of identification with Jesus who was also a formator. He was missionary of the Father and as such, he prepared a community to continue his mission.

How was Jesus a formator? How did he form? Instead of describing it, let us through the New Testament texts that reflect it. We are all invited to return often to these inspired texts, to contemplate them, and to measure up our attitudes with those of Jesus.

### **a. Jesus communicates with his life the message that is in all of his being**

- He offers peace and reconciliation; does not allow himself to be carried away by violence (Mt 10, 26-29; Mt 18, 18; J 20, 19. 23).
- His freedom awakes freedom and liberation based on the will of Father (Mk 2, 18-22. 27).
- He is a person of prayer, who at important moments and in daily life, goes to the Father and



- is always guided by Him (Mt 11, 25; Lk 6, 12-13; 11, 1-4; 23, 46; J 11, 41; 17;).
- He knows how to give human expression to his experience of God the Father; he communicates love and inspires love (Mk 14, 3-9; Lk 7, 37-38; 8, 2-3; J 21, 15-17;).
  - He welcomes his disciples and other people he meets (Lk 10, 23; 12, 32).
  - Merciful, gentle, humble; he does not create barriers against those who are excluded from the society (Mt 11, 28).
  - Realistic and perceptive; he calls on the disciples to pay attention to reality (Lk 8, 4-8).
  - Capable of friendship and communication at a deep level (J 15, 15; 16, 15).
  - He accepts the limitations of friends, even though they fail him or betray him (Mk 14, 27-28; Lk 24, 38; J 6, 67).
  - He knows how to reach the heart, to dismantle fears and to touch the root of difficulties (Mt 26, 41; Lk 24).
  - He is able to correct without destroying; he never criticizes faults in temperament; he does not treat others different because of their culture, education or social status; he never judges people based on their past. The only thing that he reproaches is the lack of faith and confidence (Mk 4, 40; 8, 18-21).
  - He transmits and makes contagious the "zeal of God for his people" (J 2,13).

## **b. Jesus forms in and through the missionary experience.**

- He involves others in mission (Mk 6, 7; Lk 9, 1-2; 10, 1) and on the way back he evaluates it with them (Lk 10, 17 ff).
- He corrects the disciples when they are mistaken, or try to be first making decisions in place of Jesus (Mk 9, 33. 35; 10, 14-29).
- He questions them when they are slow to understand (Mk 8, 14-21).
- He prepares them for situations of conflict and solitude (Mt 10, 17-25; J 16, 32-33;).
- He asks them to observe reality (Mt 6, 1-3; Mk 8, 27-29; J 4, 35).
- He reflects with them on the events of the moment (Lk 13, 1-5).
- He deals with the necessities of the people (J 6, 5), but with realism (6, 26).
- Teaches that ritual prescriptions are not absolute (Mt 12, 7.12).
- Instructs in a personalized way and knows how to listen (Mk 4, 34; 7, 17; 9, 30-31; 10, 10; 13, 3).
- He is severe with hypocrisy (Lk 11, 37-52).
- He helps people to accept their limitations (Lk 22, 32-34).
- He is demanding and requests a total self giving for love of him (Mk 10, 17-31).
- He is firm and faithful in his option for the way of the Kingdom of God and does not allow himself to be swayed away from it (Mk 8, 33; Lk 9, 54).

### **c. Jesus insists on certain principles of life in communion with his disciples**

- Not to have false images of God (J 9, 2) or interpretations of religion. They are an obstacle to the freedom of faith. To learn to read the reality with discernment.
- Not to marginalize small ones, but to welcome them in the community (Mk 10, 14-15; Lk 18, 17)
- Not to consider themselves superior, nor judges of those outside of the group of the apostles (Lk 9, 53-54), nor of those inside the group (Mt 20, 24; Mk 10, 42).
- To avoid competitiveness of functions and roles. The Romans' mentality of that time promoted a society of ranks; but, Jesus says that each one is unique in their journey of fidelity (J 21); there is no point in comparisons.
- Not to be a closed group (Mk, 38-39; Lk 9, 49-50). He rejects the mentality of the chosen people that places absolute value on belonging a group.

### **d. Jesus relies on key resources**

- **Personal witness**. It is not his "external example," but his option of life what fascinates others. *I am the way, the truth, and the life, whoever sees me, sees the Father who is the origin of everything.*

- **Scriptures.** More than a simple reading of them, Jesus proposes a new understanding of the history of Israel and the Law, starting out from his life, with new clues for interpretation and behaviour.
  
- **Situations of adversity - the cross.** At a certain moment Jesus begins to be attacked openly. The disciples go through this experience with Him. He begins to speak of rejection and the cross. This causes a strong reaction in the disciples. To accept the scandal of the cross and to persevere with meaning through trials will be a challenging hurdle, difficult to overcome.
  
- **Paying attention to daily life and to nature.** We mainly see it in the teachings of the parables and other sayings, where Jesus reveals the mystery through simple things within the reach of all human beings.
  
- **Personal dialogue.** He maintains a personal relationship with the Twelve. He lives this relationship in friendship. He dedicates time aside for more in depth explanations. As they journey together, he allows time for their questions and individual concern.
  
- **Contact with the people.** The community and the disciples participated in pilgrimages, solemn moments of celebration, weddings, suppers. He walked with them as a teacher. If we were to list all

the people with whom he had a personal encounter, we would see public sinners, prostitutes, lepers, marginalized and sick people, tax collectors, soldiers and, in the majority, simple and poor people.

- **Dialogue with the Father and with himself.** The disciples see Jesus who dedicates long periods of time to engage in dialogue with the Father. The intimacy of his prayer with the Father fascinates the Twelve. Jesus entrusts the Father his moments of joy, satisfaction, pain, questioning and fears. In his moments of solitude and retreat, he makes decisions and reflects on his experiences.

The continuous confrontation of our attitudes with those of Jesus, will not only illuminate us in the search for evangelical motivations of our concrete options, but it also will give us the strength to be his witnesses with joy and conviction. This will be the best source of formation in whatever field we are entrusted with.

### **2.3. Characteristics of formation according to our Founders**

Ever since the first group of sisters was formed, Maria Antonia assumed the task of formation. She exercised first this responsibility in an informal way in Tarragona, and later with the community founded in Santiago de Cuba. In her writings, we can see the most significant elements of her personality which

helped her in the task of formation: her understanding of the human being, her capacity to relate to others with kindness and patience, pedagogical predisposition, integrity in witnessing the love of Christ, prudence and freedom in discernment, life of prayer<sup>4</sup>. What has been written in the Constitutions and other writings reflects her giftedness as a formator and her experience, which she offered as an example to others<sup>5</sup>.

By the side of the formator there is an insistence to foster in the formandee the following attitudes:

- Availability and openness in the formation process
- Humility and certain maturity in self-acceptance
- Generosity and a detachment for a gradual availability to serve
- Strengthening of one's character
- Theological life, in faith, hope and love
- Community style of living, audacious and daring apostolic spirit.

The formandee ought to feel welcomed in the Institute, growing in identity and identification with the Institute without seeking security or prestige. External signs of growth in this journey are:

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aut. 22. 121.

<sup>5</sup> All is explained in the part III of the First Constitutions. In *Escritos autobiográficos*, 617 – 544.

happiness, freedom to give and serve, missionary availability, growing love towards the Institute.

Father Claret in his writings to the young missionaries, insists on apostolic qualities of *humility and right intention and to become better fit each day to give glory of God and the salvation of souls*<sup>6</sup>.

Although Mother Foundress did not use expressly the concept of accompaniment, she speaks of a process to initiate sisters, little by little, to the liturgical and personal life of prayer, focussing it on Christ and taking the Gospel as a rule of life; not as an imposition, but arising from the experience of the “Divine Teacher” and the Virgin Mary. While the Mistress is to be careful that the formandeas do not lack the necessary things; she ought to guide them to live responsibly the demands of poverty, as a free option for the love of Jesus Christ, “who they are trying to be like.”

Formation is understood as a process to discover and become rooted in a lifestyle of discipleship and configuration with Jesus, living out our missionary call, which demands an eagerness to proclaim the Gospel and availability for the mission as well as the Apostles and first ecclesial communities lived. The main characteristics of the missionary identity coincide with the qualities of Jesus: such as humility, meekness, poverty, simple style of preaching, of

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<sup>6</sup> S. Anthony M. Claret, Reglamento para los Estudiantes y el Formador. In *Booklets for Formation CMF*. N. 1.

approaching people, and having as the source of everything the unconditional surrender to the Father.

The community, which welcomes and accompanies the formation process, has an important role. It is to give a transparent testimony of the discipleship of Jesus. During the times of the Founders there were no special formation communities, because all communities welcomed candidates. At the time of admission to the profession, each community expressed through a voting process its decision.

The available means of formation were very simple: prayer and silence, classes, conferences, personal dialogue between the formator and formandee; physical work collaborating in house chores; personal readings and commentaries; daily practice of the examination; participation in the Eucharist and sacrament of Reconciliation.

The process of accompaniment normally lasted from the entrance to the congregation until two years after profession.



### **3. THE DYNAMIC AXLES OF FORMATION**

The charism is a vivifying gift of the Holy Spirit, who since the beginnings of the Institute, urges and leads the congregational community through history. The dynamizing axles are the most relevant elements of the charism and of the identity which springs from the experience of the charism beginning with our Founders. All of them must be present in each stage and each dimension of formation as elements that form it and energize it. We are not trying here to respond exhaustively to the question what our charism is, because it cannot be reduced to the content of brief descriptions. However all together they constitute the basis for vocational discernment in all the stages.

#### **3. 1. "Apostles of Jesus Christ..."**

As it was for the Apostles, the centre of the Claretian life is the person of Christ - "our highest Good". He is the one sent by the Father, the one we follow, and with whom we are being configured, especially in his mission of announcing the Good News. The prayerful reading and the contemplation of the Gospel

and the Paschal mystery<sup>7</sup> create the basis on which, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the assimilation of the Christ's lifestyle, his feelings, his options, his self-giving, and his missionary life occurs gradually. This configuration with Him is expressed in utmost fidelity in living out the evangelical counsels.

The path of identification with Him goes through the deepening experience of the Eucharist, as it was for our Founders, and leads us to discover Him present and acting in people and history.

Fidelity to Christ is renewed every day, because every day we respond a fresh to the call of the Lord choosing Him even in difficult moments, knowing that no one can separate us from His love. Our configuration with Christ will be complete when the Passover of the Lord is fulfilled in us.

Following Christ in "imitation of the Apostles" leads us to a simple lifestyle, oriented to announcing of the Kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

### **3.2. Grounded in Poverty**

In the practice of the evangelical counsels, poverty is the foundation of the new apostles' life and the "master key to introduce in the human heart the Holy Law of the Lord ". (Const. 13) Configuration with

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<sup>7</sup> Our Mother Foundress' Christocentrism is revealed, above all, in her experience of the Crucified One: "I learned everything in Christ Crucified, from the Holy Three of the Cross". Aut. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Const. 3. 6. 11. 13. 21. 28. 49. 61. .80. 83. 94. 97.

Christ in His poverty and a life lived in poverty constitute, according to Mother Foundress, the very means by which the renewal of the Church will come about.

To choose poverty as a life style (in simplicity, love of work, renouncing power, freedom from material goods, self-giving... etc.), for the Claretian missionary sister it is a privileged way of announcing the Gospel. According to Fr. Claret, is part of the mission: "I have fulfilled my mission... I have preached the law of God... I have observed Holy poverty".<sup>9</sup>

As a transversal axle, it crosses, gives form and, even unifies, all areas of our life: our relationship with God, apostolic activity and community life.

### **3. 3. "... in imitation of the Immaculate Virgin Mary"**

Mary, through her life of poverty, obedience, and virginity, consecrated totally to the work of the Lord, must be the great "sign" in our life's journey. Her fidelity to Christ and her maternal protection over the Church and humanity, contemplated in the light of the Word of God, encourage us in our personal journey, to collaborate in her maternal function over the People of God.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Epistolary II, Letter to P. Curríus, October 1869.

The Mystery of the Immaculate Virgin, according to our Founders, is the dynamism to combat anything that is against the Kingdom of God. This demands an enlightened and daring formation. (Cf. Const. 9. 30. 31. 34)

To be apostles as the Immaculate Virgin Mary requires growth in missionary availability and openness to the action of God within us, so that our love may be fruitful and creative, and not seeking any type of compensation. It helps us to grow and to live our mission from a woman's perspective, offering a testimony of our feminine realization. She herself is Teacher and Formator in this journey.

### **3. 4. "To experience the 'burden' of the Church"**

Since the original inspiration ("initial vision"), the ecclesial dimension of our Charism has the peculiar characteristic of commitment towards the constant renewal of the Church, with especial concern for consecrated people. For both Founders it was an experience of pain and hope that led them to humble and persistent prayer for the needs of the Church, to constant conversion, to witness a life of poverty and to announce the Word by all means. As Claretian Missionary Sisters, heirs of this gift, we must try to live the renewal of the Church as a great concern rooted in love, so that the Church will show the true Face of Christ to all peoples in the different cultures, times and places. In the same way, we feel impelled

to collaborate in the permanent renewal of consecrated life. This demands personal and community conversion and an apostolic work that is truly ecclesial. (Cf. Const. 7. 8. 50. 64)

### **3. 5. "One family and a single heart"**

"The Lord wants us to be one family." This challenge, already in the origins of the Institute, is lived as a gift and a task; the task of maintaining the bonds of union amidst dispersion and diversity. The testimony of unity is indispensable in the announcement of the Gospel. This charismatic grace leads us to build a family for the purpose of announcing the Good News of the Kingdom of God; and to look constantly for ways of expressing our communion through the complete communication of spiritual and material goods. This communication and exchange takes place and develops in each community and requires, on the part of each member, certain qualities, cultivated and deepened through faith. (Cf. Const. 11. 20. 37. 51)

### **3. 6. "To teach the divine law to all creatures"**

Our ecclesial mission to announce the Word is fulfilled by uniting the faithful witness of the Gospel with the preaching of the same Gospel "until death". The Claretian consecration encompasses as an essential element, apostolic action, "making us all for all by the donation of ourselves" (Const. 63). Our

reason to be -the nature of our existence- in the Church is that God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, may be known and loved by all peoples (Const. 10).

To this purpose, the love of Sacred Scriptures needs to be fostered during the entire formation process: its prayerful reading and understanding, the point of reference in our personal and communitarian discernment, and light in the evangelization task.

Mission is for us, as Claretians, the place of growth and encounter with God; our community and personal life projects must be organized according to it; it demands fidelity and constant search for new approaches to evangelization. (Cf. Const. 3. 61-70)

### **3. 7. "Unite contemplation and action"**

The joyful contemplation of the Gospel (all our prayer life) and our apostolic action must be mutually enhanced in our lives as Claretians (Cf. Const. 53).

The evangelizing word will only reach the hearts if "it springs from the forge of prayer" (Const. 49). At the same time, our apostolate is also source of spirituality for each Claretian Sister who, in all her activities - prayer, community tasks, leisure and apostolate, even in suffering, seeks the Kingdom of God.

This requires a continued pedagogy in our formation. It has to be an attitude shaped up by the Word of God in openness to discover His signs in the day to day history, discerning them in dialogue with the Lord and the sisters.

**These essential elements of our Charism vitalize each other mutually and converge in the same mystery of Christ, in the Word that illumines them all, in the reality that is the point of reference to update and inculturate our Charism today.**

**Simultaneously, they are "privileged places" of formation; sources of inspiration and apostolic strength for every age and place.**

**Continues contact and experience of them energizes the process of our vocational growth until "the Passover of the Lord is fulfilled in us."**

## **4. GENERAL CRITERIA OF FORMATION**

These criteria are to be present in the entire formative itinerary in a gradual, organic, continuous and assessed way. Of course, it will be necessary to insist more on some areas than in others, depending on the stages and personal disposition:

### ***Human growth***

1. The point of departure in the formative accompaniment is each sister's reality so that it may help her in following the vocational journey in all stages of life. It is important to respect each person's process.
2. To embrace the task of personal growth in the different stages of life and in all dimensions: physical, psychological, affective and spiritual.
3. To get used to understanding of formation as a process that lasts a lifetime, based on the person and her social surroundings. It should be included in the personal and community projects in concordance with the historical context and the evangelizing mission of the community (Cf. Const. 73; Dir. 118).



4. To carry out the formative process with the conviction that it is a reciprocal effort between formators and formandees. This requires an active and responsible collaboration, in a trustworthy and realistic environment (Cf. Const. 107-108).
5. To strive for a solidly founded formation, integrating personal capacities, knowledge and acceptance of one's cultural values and openness to other cultures (Cf. Const. 75; Dir 118).
6. From the beginnings to know and appreciate the cultural roots of sisters' origins and that of the places of Claretian presence.
7. To facilitate periods of time for planning, sharing, and evaluation at all levels (Cf. Dir. 46-48).
8. To activate mechanisms of constant re-evaluation and feedback which stimulate the faithful experience of the Claretian vocation as a form of life in the Church. (Cf. Dir. 51)
9. To promote a positive acceptance of our own feminine reality and a balanced sense of self-esteem; to develop, as much as possible, the qualities that God has placed in each one of us (Cf. IX Gen. Chap. FO 41).

10. To educate for freedom and in freedom; to assume responsibility for our own decisions more and more (Cf. Const. 90; Dir. 145; IX Gen. Chap. FO 41).

### ***Following Christ***

11. Confrontation with Christ and living the Gospel is the framework and permanent reference for evaluating the integral growth of each sister (Const. 83).

12. To treasure the Word of God as a central means of continuing self-formation and evangelization; to give priority to the practice of *Lectio Divina* (Dir. 78).

13. To practice the human values of the Kingdom: truth, openness, capacity to share without competitiveness, friendship, freedom, sensitivity and a commitment to justice, peace, and solidarity (Cf. Const. 111; Dir. 97; IX Gen. Chapter. FO 43).

14. To cultivate a deep experience of God, that helps to develop the spirituality incarnated in history (Cf. Const. 72; IX Gen. Chap. FO 97).

15. To form a critical vision through a faith-based reading of our personal, social, congregational, and ecclesial reality. (Dir. 96)

16. To promote a theoretical and practical formation of personal and community discernment in order to respond as Claretians in different circumstances of life and to find better ways of evangelization. (Cf. Const. 75. 82; Dir. 36. 37).
17. Through knowledge of the methods and practice of communication, strengthen our capacity to communicate and dialogue, to favor a serene exchange of opinions and to create a favorable environment to search, through discernment, for God's will.

### ***Claretian identity and belongingness***

18. To strengthen our awareness of universal missionary vocation, without being uprooted from one's own culture. To promote evangelical zeal, capacity for inculturation, and openness to other cultures, overcoming prejudices. These attitudes also need to be promoted in community, where different ages and mentalities share together (cf. Const. 38-39; Dir. 43. 48).
19. To develop a sense of belongingness and concern for the Church. To encourage communion and co-responsibility with local Churches; to deepen the ecclesiology of Vatican II (Cf. Const. 7. 8. 50. 64; Dir. 95).

20. To give the Eucharist its central importance in community life, as a dynamizing source of conversion, communion and the proclamation of the Gospel (Const. 51; Dir. 79).
21. To offer a liturgical formation, to comprehend the role of the sacraments in the life of the Church and study in depth the Liturgy of the Hours (Cf. Const. 51-52. 58).
22. To develop the capacity to integrate conflict and the Cross constructively in one's personal experience.
23. To guide in an evangelical way our sensitivity and options in relationship to suffering in the world and solidarity with the needs of the people (Dir. 30).
24. To cultivate creativity and initiative, courage and risk required by our missionary spirit in order to collaborate in the transformation of the world with the Gospel (Cf. Const. 111; IX Gen. Chap. FO 89-91).
25. To promote formation that favors a renewed and prophetic experience of our vows, sharing in the freedom of Christ with the poorest of the poor, committed in a concrete way to the JPIC.
26. To strengthen the love for life and creation in ecological awareness.

27. To seek balance and integration between theory and practice, faith and life in the formation process.
28. To promote updated and incarnated reading of the Founders' writings and Charism.
29. To give importance to the formation community, as a place of growth that testifies, welcomes, accompanies, and serves as a point of reference (Cf. Const. 85. 97. 210).



## **5. AGENTS AND PLACES OF FORMATION**

### **5.1. *Holy Spirit***

The Holy Spirit is the main agent and protagonist of our formation. Its very action gives effectiveness to all the formation dynamism. Hence, the importance of gradually learning to distinguish its motions by means of discernment and to recognize its presence in the congregational, ecclesial, and social mediations. (Cf. Const. 2. 5. 12. 13. 28. 38. 52. 80. 91. 97. 101)

### **5.2. *Mary Immaculate***

Mary, associated to the work of the Trinity, first amongst those called, faithful disciple, member and Mother of the Church, is model for us. In the forge of her love each Claretian Sister is being formed. With her maternal care, she maintains and animates our missionary fidelity. (Cf. Const. 9. 55. 62. 109)

### **5. 3. *The Church***

The Church that redefines itself more and more as communion and participation feeds its faithful with the Word, the Tradition, the Magisterium, and the Sacraments (Cf. PI 22). At the same time it is the agent and place of formation that must be joyfully embraced by us. Our ecclesial vocation and the call to collaborate in its continuous renewal lead us to be in tune with the local communities, sharing their difficulties and their joys. It also requires that we prepare sisters to discern which is the concrete charismatic contribution, out of our peculiar consecration, in communion with the other members of the People of God. (Cf. Const. 7. 8. 64. 69)

### **5. 4. *The Community***

"Community life plays a privileged role in the process of formation at any stage" (PI 26). Our religious community must be the ordinary place of growth, renewal and ongoing formation, creating a climate of prayer, of spiritual freedom and fraternal help, attentive to what the Lord expects of us in each concrete situation. The community sets objectives and evaluates them. During the first stages of formation, we should foster the development of formation teams who accompany and collaborate in the discernment of formandeas (Cf. Const. 85. 96-97. 102; PI 27. 32).

## **5. 5. *The Apostolic Mission***

It is a required setting of formation for us. Being "new apostles" demands a life that witnesses; and therefore, it is in continuous conversion and renewal. At the same time, it requires that we understand and know how to assess the situation of the people whom we evangelize and to search for ways to help them to encounter the Gospel as Good News. This "apostolic glance" towards the world has to be developed from the beginning, as a capacity of reading reality in faith, and has to continue developing progressively.

That is why the social and cultural place in which the formation community is inserted is of great importance. It provides the first experience of testimony and of the practice of understanding the needs of the People of God.

The people with whom we work are also agents of formation for us as they question us, sometimes challenging with their lives and their searches; other times they lead us to deepen our motivations and evangelical values.

Beginning with the first stages of religious life, apostolic activity has to be prepared carefully and evaluated in all dimensions: attitudes, contents, methodology and critical analysis. (Cf. Const. 63. 72. 82. 86. 96-97. 101; Dir. 133. 143. 188; PI 14)



## **5. 6. *Each Claretian Missionary Sister***

Each one of us, since joining religious life, has the primary responsibility for one's own fidelity and ongoing formation, because the call of God in Christ within the Church opens a concrete opportunity of salvation and sanctification that is unique and unrepeated. (Cf. Const. 100; IX Gen. Chap. VR 46; FO 6; PI 29).

## **5. 7. *Formators***

"The task of the Formator has a decisive character in the formation. Her role is to discern the authenticity of the call to religious life in the initial phase of formation and at the same time to assist the religious toward a successful personal dialogue with God while they are discovering the ways in which He seems to wish them to advance (Cf. PI 30). Her testimony of life, friendship, understanding, capacity of confrontation and respect to the person is important in formation.

The task of the Formator must be substantiated by her way of life. Her words, actions, and everything within her possibilities need to favor a climate of trust and serene openness, of joyful and motivated living of the Gospel according to our Charism and keep awoken an interest in current events. (Cf. Const. 104-111)

The Formator has to accompany in a personalized way each formandee, dedicating time and sufficient spaces to create a climate of trust, openness, and a relationship of dialogue and support that favor the discernment process.

It is very convenient that the formation task be carried out and shared by a Formation Team. This team reflects, programs, and evaluates the formation guidelines adapting them to the concrete reality of the formandees, respecting the responsibility of the formator. The team is constituted by the Major Superior.

The sisters who collaborate with the Formators have to consider their testimony of life, their ministerial responsibilities, and to be in communion with the Formator's directives (Cf. Dir. 201).

## **5. 8. *The Superiors***

Their co-responsibility in the task of formation at local, provincial and general level consist of supporting, encouraging and accompanying the processes of planning and discernment. Let the way of exercising the evangelical service of authority promote the spirit of family in mutual confidence and dialogue, seeking the growth of each sister. (Cf. Const. 118-119; PI 30)

## **5. 9. *The Prefecture of Formation***

Its task is to stimulate the formative action and its coordination, promoting interest in formation and the active participation of all the sisters who collaborate in it (Cf. Dir. 204. 300).

For a better functioning and support of the formation activities, formation teams may be organized in the Major Entities in conformity with the directives of the Major Superior.

The Prefecture fosters and animates the exchange of experiences and materials among the Formators of different stages and Entities.

It seems convenient to promote initiatives of ongoing formation, exchange experiences and evaluation with the Formators of the different Entities (Cf. Dir. 196. 197. 300; IX Gen. Chap. FO 164).

All the sisters involved in the formation (Formators, superiors, prefects and others) should maintain intimate unity of spirit and action. Form amongst each other and with the rest of the sisters a true family who responds to the prayer of the Lord: "may they be a single heart" (Cf. Const. 108; Dir. 204. 300).

## 6. LEVELS OF FORMATION

We present two fundamental levels of formation. They have been differentiated to facilitate the pedagogical order, but in the experience of formation they should always be united and geared toward personal integration.

At the **experiential level** we should take into account all the means of formation that support human growth, the deep personal encounter with Jesus, and living one's baptismal consecration which becomes more concrete for us in our consecration as Claretian Missionary Sisters.

This includes the following: self-knowledge and acceptance, working one's personal history and culture, prayer, liturgical and sacramental life, seeing one's life and world situations in the light of the Word of God, progressive assimilation of theological virtues in unity with the evangelical counsels, Marian devotion, deepening Claretian community and apostolic experiences. (Cf. Const. 75. 82. 83. 101; Dir. 118; IX Gen. Chap. FO 49-84)

At the **doctrinal level**, we should consider since the initial stages the studies and deep reflection of different topics that help us to live our consecration

as Claretian Missionary Sisters (understanding the process of human development, learning to read the signs of the time, Sacred Scripture, theology, Charism and spirituality, history of the Church and of the Congregation). In the flow of life, we should keep in mind the preparation that our apostolic work requires, in order to be capable and responsible in our evangelization. (Cf. Const. 86; Dir. 132. 133. 142. 143. 187-189)

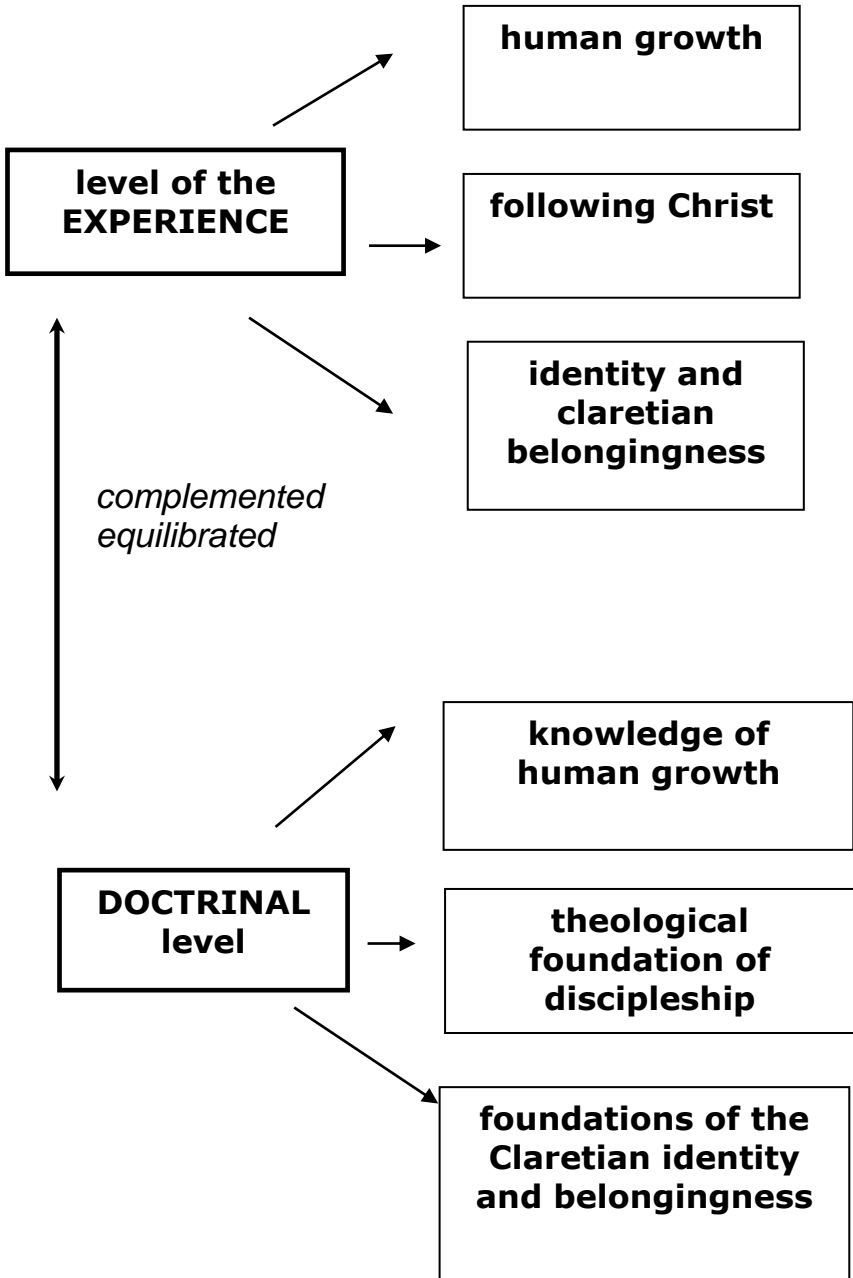
It is very important to find a balance among the different aspects of our formation, so that professional development does not hinder the meaning of our consecration, or our spiritual cultivation becomes an obstacle to our missionary commitment (Cf. Const. 5. 67. 96. 101; IX Gen. Chap. FO 85 - 101; PI 17).

These two aspects complement each other and are integrated in one's life with the help of accompaniment, which is very convenient, especially in the initial stages of formation. In this way, the integration of the intellectual-doctrinal, emotional-affective and volitive (decision making ability) dimension will lead to grow in Claretian identity.

We will now specify the content of the different stages of formation which is a lifelong process. Both the experience and the assimilation of the contents constitute a dynamic process that needs to be appropriate for each congregational situation, as well as each person.

In the explanation of the specific stages no distinction is made between the two levels, because experience has shown us that they intertwine and are interdependent.





## **GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

To guide and promote formation  
as a constant process that leads us to live  
more and more  
our Claretian identity  
and to contribute to the permanent renewal  
of the Church  
living out the Gospel and  
teaching it to all peoples.



## **7. FIRST STAGES OF FORMATION**

### **7.1 ASPIRANCY**

It is the time between Vocational Youth Ministry and formation in Postulancy, in which the young woman shows special interest towards Religious Life and wishes to have contact with the Congregation, staying in its environment or in communities conveniently designated to realize this experience.

At the same time, the Congregation gets to know the young woman and her reality, accompanies her and facilitates human and Christian formation needed for her vocational discernment process.

The convenience of this time of formation is always advisable, especially if some of the following conditions are present:

- the need of a greater human integration
- the need of an initiation and Christian deepening that is not possible in her own environment
- lack of vocational and/or charismatic clarity
- the need of a greater knowledge about the young woman, her family, social, cultural, human and Christian reality.

The way to realize this stage depends on and must be appropriate to the reality of each young woman. For some, it may be through condensed programmed times of contact with the community, or living in a community where she would have the opportunity to share in faith, have apostolic and community experience, appropriate for her discernment, with gradual and progressive commitments. It is convenient that she joins some youth ministry group.

The young woman must express freely her desire to be accompanied in her process of vocational discernment and commits herself actively to it. In order to understand the candidate better, it is important to know the family and social background where she has developed.

She must be accompanied by a sister who will respect and guide her vocational process with a critical attitude that questions her options, purifies and enriches her motivations, helps her to know the different vocations and Charism and also helps her to discover her mission within the Church. The sister must create an environment of trust to listen, without prejudices to the young woman's personal history, respecting her process without skipping any stages. She will be initiated in the personal project.

It is always important to have in mind that this is an orientation phase, without any commitment with the Institute. Each Entity will see the convenience and

way of asking for a financial contribution from the young candidate or her family. It is crucial to present the different ways of serving the Lord during this stage. The absence of a spirit of recruitment by the Congregation will offer the young candidates the necessary freedom to choose their vocation.

Cf. Const. 75; Dir. 127-131.

## ***OBJECTIVE***

**At the end of this stage, the young woman should have increased her knowledge of the Congregation. Her motivations have become clearer through an owned process of human and Christian maturity.**

## ***CRITERIA TO INITIATE THIS STAGE***

1. The Congregation should have sufficient knowledge of the young woman and her family.
2. The candidate should have:
  - Freedom to choose
  - Love of life
  - Experience of Christian life
  - Capacity of interpersonal relationships
  - Normal relationship with same or other sex
  - Interest in Claretian Religious Life

- Enough physical and psychological health.

## ***INTEGRAL FORMATION***

### ***Human growth***

This dimension is basic to each vocation. It is convenient that from the beginning, we stress the importance of understanding our experience as human beings and promote a maturation process that includes:

1. Knowledge and acceptance of “self”.
2. General knowledge of integral human development.
3. Elaboration of personal and family history.
4. Progressive discovery of human values such as: sincerity, listening, communication, respect, collaboration.
5. Group and/or Christian community experience.
6. Responsibility with studies and work.

### ***Following Jesus***

1. To be initiated in the knowledge of Jesus in the Gospel and discover him present in others.
2. To be initiated in personal prayer.
3. Progressive experience of the Sacraments
4. To be introduced to the practice of confronting their lives and the reality of the world with the Word of God.

5. A commitment to those who are poor and marginalized.
6. A greater acknowledgement and awareness of the different forms of discipleship.

### ***Claretian identity and belongingness***

1. Knowledge of the Congregation and Founders.
2. Adequate participation in the life of the community.
3. The community that welcomes the candidate must decide which spaces to share and distinguish which not, so as not to anticipate successive stages of formation and help the candidate. To live this period with greater freedom to choose.
4. Collaboration -programmed and evaluated- in some of the community's activities.
5. Participation in Vocational Encounters.

### ***PLACE:***

There are different ways of living this stage:

1. In her family, work, school environment - they must have periodical encounters with the sister responsible of their accompaniment. It is convenient for the candidate to have the experience of living certain periods of time with the community to facilitate her vocational discernment.

2. In one of our communities, according to what seems convenient to the respective Entity.

In both cases, the fraternal atmosphere must be a healthy one, friendly and of apostolic commitment.

### ***DURATION:***

It will depend on the suitability, formation, and maturity of the aspirant (Cf. IX Gen Chap. FO 105). If she is not called to our Institute, she should be oriented as soon as possible to another one or to the lay vocation as a responsible baptized person (Cf. IX Gen Chap. FO 108).

### ***CONTACT WITH THE FAMILY:***

Frequent. When the aspirants are living in a community, the person in charge will decide how often it should be, according to each case.

Contact with the family should serve the maturation process of the young person. This includes a peaceful acceptance of family experience, even if it is conflictive or negative (Cf. IX Gen. Chap. FO 108). In each place and situation, we shall consider the possibilities and most convenient way for the candidate or her family to contribute financially during this stage of formation.

***PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STAGE:***

There should be a sister assigned for this mission, but the community has to collaborate, according to the possibilities (Cf. IX Gen. Chap. FO 108).

She should be able to create an atmosphere of understanding, cordiality, and express her love for the Institute. She should be flexible enough to respond to each candidate according to her needs. She is designated by the Major Superior with the consultative vote of her Council. (Cf. Dir. 131)



## **7.2. POSTULANCY**

This stage implies a first commitment of formation with the Congregation. It is convenient to begin with a simple celebration in community.

Its purpose, from side of the young person, as it clearly appears in our Directory 132 is to make a gradual transition to consecrated community life through personal and Christian growth. From the side of the community - to assess the young person's aptitude and indications of a Claretian vocation, so that she can respond to the call with responsibility and freedom and continue her formation in the Novitiate.

To assume the demands of religious life requires remarkable maturity; therefore, enough time should be set aside to favor knowledge and growth in all areas. Considering the inner dynamism of human beings, candidates to religious life should have the capacity to progressively acquire maturity and are not expected to have already attained it. The necessary means should be established to facilitate this process. The experience of community life during this stage, which is more involved than during aspirancy, will help in this journey without trying to accelerate it.

It is important to know the reality of young people in the modern world, and how this affects their lives,



according to each context. If in the previous stage it has not been possible, it is necessary to become acquainted with the family and social environment which the sister in formation comes from.

As a result of this knowledge and out of the necessity to harmonize the formative proposals with the different aspects of the person, educative and pedagogical guidelines will be elaborated for each young candidate.

Departing from the objectives and action guidelines of this stage we insist on the following:

- Self-knowledge: health, maturity (human, Christian, vocational...), motivations, aptitudes and attitudes (sincerity, transparency, generosity, joy, organization of work...)
- Maturation: commitment and responsibility in her own growth, increasing freedom, purification of motivations, discipline and organization of time (study, community tasks...)
- Christian experience (life of prayer, selfless service, the Word and the sacraments...)
- Initial contact with the Charism. Knowledge of religious life and its demands within the Claretian lifestyle.
- Experience of community and apostolic commitment as part of the Claretian identity.

Those in formation need integration of their affective, intellectual and volitive areas to help them to deal with

the new situation and style of life (self-awareness, vows, apostolate, relationships with others and with things, spirituality, community...) as a response to the call they discover in their heart as vocation.

The community and the formator should create a climate of trust to facilitate communication and gradual insertion in fraternal life with joy and responsibility.

Cf. Const. 76 - 79; Dir. 132 – 139.

### ***OBJECTIVE***

**At the end of this stage the postulant has become aware of her call to religious life and our Claretian Charism. She has followed her process of discernment and accompaniment, continuing the integration of her person in following Jesus; has made the transition from her family environment to that of religious life and wants to initiate the experience of Claretian life in the novitiate. The community considers that she is apt for our lifestyle.**

### ***CRITERIA TO INITIATE THIS STAGE***

1. Explicit motivations to follow Christ in missionary consecrated life.

2. Basic knowledge of the Charism and life of the Congregation.
3. Some apostolic experience in the local Church.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

- Minimum age 18 years
- To present/the documentation required by our legislation; other documents can be requested according to the customs of each country (Cf. Dir 135)
- Studies of secondary education or equivalent

## ***INTEGRAL FORMATION***

### ***Human growth***

1. To provide an experience of interpersonal relationships with young people of her age and the sisters of her community.
2. To encourage an increasing integration of all aspects of her personality: affectivity, feelings, sexuality, autonomy, freedom, cultural dimension, creativity.
3. To facilitate the study of her personality with the help of a professional in the field.
4. To continue deepening personal and family history, working on lived experiences.

5. To critically assume and value her own culture to incarnate the Charism.
6. To further manual, cultural, recreational and sporty activities.
7. To help to discover the value of silence.
8. To offer systematic personal accompaniment.
9. To develop an evangelical and critical approach toward mass media, events, culture, and daily life.
10. Initiation in the study of some of the main languages spoken in the Congregation.

### ***Following Jesus***

1. Deepen her knowledge of Jesus and friendship with Him.
2. Personal encounter with Christ in prayer.
3. Motivate her to practice the daily examination (introduce it as a means of discernment, learning to recognize God's steps in the life).
4. To introduce the postulant to liturgical and community prayer.
5. To pray with the Word and enlighten with it her life.
6. To provide an introduction to theological studies, in accordance with the possibilities of each place and sister.
7. To deepen on the biblical foundations of vocation.
8. To promote the love for the Church, experiencing herself as an active member.
9. To deepen the Christian meaning of reconciliation in daily life.
10. To foster a theologically based love for Mary.

11. To deepen the experience of the sacraments of initiation, especially the Eucharist; offer adequate preparation for Reconciliation.
12. To foster and give basis for the solidarity and evangelical response to the situations of injustice.

### ***Claretian identity and belongingness***

1. Gradual integration of community life, promoting the values that favor living together.
2. To offer general information of the history of the Congregation and the life of the Founders.
3. To spark interest in the life of the Claretian family: informative bulletins, circulars, projects.
4. To promote active celebration of congregational feast days.
5. Participation in the apostolic activities of the Congregation in order to foster development of missionary attitudes.
6. To encourage gradual commitment in sharing goods.
7. To help them to draw near to the reality of the poor and marginalized.

### ***PLACE:***

It could be in any community suitable for it (PI 44; Dir. 136). The insertion of the young sister in the different

communities should be gradual and well programmed.

Novitiate house as long as the stage is distinguished from the novitiate.

The document PI 44 says this stage is not yet initiation in religious life.

***DURATION:***

Normally it will be from six months to two years (Cf. Const. 78).

***PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STAGE:***

It should be a competent person, supported by the other sisters, taking into account that not all can intervene in the same way in the accompaniment of the formandee.

She shall work in unity with the sister in charge of the previous stage and with the Mistress of Novices, so that there will be continuity in formation.

She will be assigned by the Major Superior with the deliberative vote of her council. (Dir. 138)

### **7.3. NOVITIATE**

It is the most important stage of the initial formation (defined canonically) in which the formandee has the opportunity to learn about and experience the life style of the Congregation; the novice embraces it and deepens it, through a profound experience of God, integration in the community and participation in its mission. It is a stage of intense discernment of her vocational option to be a disciple of Jesus in the Claretian Charism through the profession of the evangelical counsels.

- Formation during the novitiate is oriented so that the formandee, starting out of her personal reality and progressive experience of God, embraces with love and responsibility the opportunities that the Congregation offers, and has the opportunity to experience the life style and mission of the community.
- Through personal accompaniment and certain spacing from her prior form of life, the formandee shapes her way of being in the experience of the Claretian Charism. She confronts her personal knowledge, capacities, gifts and limitations with the exigencies of a consecrated life totally at the service of the Gospel.
- The main point of reference in all the formation process, but especially in this stage, has to be the

centrality of Christ, His Word and His Kingdom, as our Founders lived it.

- The formator should foster in the formandee an experience of God: in prayer, in any activity and in the relationship with her inner self; at the time evaluate community and apostolic life, always including the illumination from the Word of God, introducing her to the practice of a faith-based reading of life's events and relationships.
- The essential contents of the doctrinal and experiential aspects of formation come from the fundamental elements of our Claretian Charism, as the GPF indicates. These are contained in our Constitutions. They will be adapted to the reality of each formandee through a project establishing objectives and means. Based on it, the formator will help the novice to
  - elaborate her own personal project that guarantees an individualized approach.
  - It is necessary to offer an updated formation on the content and experience of the vows, that implies interior detachment, austerity -personal and communitarian -, and generous giving of oneself.
- The formative community strives to work as a team and fosters participation in the formative task, reserving a space for its own planning and



evaluation, without misplacing the role of the formator.

- The life style of the community should facilitate freedom, co-responsibility and discernment, with quality relationships among people who are centred in their vocational experience, and capable of sharing in spontaneous ways, as well as in programmed encounters.

Cf. Const. 80 - 93; Dir 140 – 168.

## ***OBJECTIVE***

**At the end of this stage, the novice has discerned her vocation, through the encounter with herself, with others and with God; she has experienced the demands of discipleship of Jesus as a Claretian religious and wants to give a free and conscious answer to his call, professing in our Congregation. The Congregation confirms and welcomes her decision.**

## ***CRITERIA TO BEGIN THIS STAGE***

1. Gradual personal integration as a disciple of Jesus.
2. To become aware of her call to religious life in our Claretian Charism.

3. Capacity of interpersonal relationships inside and outside the religious community.
4. Apostolic spirit.
5. The approval of the community, considering her apt for our style of life.

## ***INTEGRAL FORMATION***

### ***Human growth***

1. To embrace and integrate one's own personal history recognizing God's presence in it.
2. To form in freedom and openness to the Spirit, practicing discernment in daily life.
3. To cultivate attitudes which facilitate fraternal relationships and promote self-knowledge and personal integration: friendship, service, responsibility, austerity, simplicity, silence, and sincerity, capacity to listen and dialogue, detachment (austerity), team work, and constructive criticism.
4. To promote artistic, manual, cultural, and sports activities.
5. Autonomy and creativity: to educate in responsibility and discernment of decisions.
6. Integration of the different aspects of personality, with special emphasis in affectivity and sexuality.
7. To become initiated in the practice of analysis of the reality.

## ***Following Jesus***

1. To motivate personal responsibility in one's prayer life, so that it is experienced as a necessity and not as an external observance.
2. To offer Biblical and Christological foundations of the evangelical counsels. To become initiated in the practice of the evangelical counsels, as a radical experience of discipleship of Christ.
3. To pray with the Word and to illuminate the reality from this perspective.
4. To continue practicing daily examination in attitude of discernment.
5. To be open to needs of the local and universal Church.
6. To love Mary as the first disciple, formator, and Mother; making an effort to interiorize her attitudes.
7. To be introduced to systematic theological studies.
8. To foster an attitude of faith, hope and love to be able to discover the presence of God in the history.
9. Foster and deepen the experience God in the encounter with self, the community and the mission, as a way of developing an incarnated spirituality.
10. To intensify, in prayer and daily life, the affective relationship with Jesus.
11. Centre one's affectivity in the Lord
12. To live intently the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

13. To provide opportunities for apostolic experiences and contact with the poor.
14. To base on Christ the commitment to justice, peace and integrity of the creation on our evangelical option.

### ***Claretian identity and belongingness***

1. To promote the understanding and study of the Constitutions, Directory, and other congregational documents.
2. Studies of the Constitutions: to deepen the biblical, theological and charismatic foundations of our life.
3. To foster an existential and systematic study of the History of the Congregation and the Founders.
4. To cultivate a great love of poverty, as characteristic of our Charism and foundation of "New Apostles," seeking to become identified with Christ in his poverty.
5. To develop a contemplative attitude integrating action and contemplation. To continue promoting a good relationship and collaboration within the Claretian Family.
6. To assimilate the apostolic activities as mission.
7. To foster increasing identification with the Claretian Charism, personalizing a sense of belongingness in the Congregation.
8. To offer in one of our communities -during the second year- an experience of the apostolate and community life; it has to be well programmed and evaluated.

9. To know and to love the sisters who have preceded us and in a special way Teresita Albarracín and Patrocinio Giner.
10. To intensify love for the Church, contributing to its renewal with one's own life and praying for her necessities.
11. To actively participate in the life of the community with a sense of ownership.

***PLACE:***

In the house established as Novitiate. With permission from the Major Superior, novices can reside temporarily in another place, if this favors their formation. (Dir. 150)

***DURATION:***

Two complete years. The first year will be canonical. (Cf. Const. 89)

***PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STAGE:***

The Mistress of novices has to be a sister capable of accompanying in prayer, of helping during this process of formation and of discernment with equality and tact. She will have to balance the different

aspects of formation and coordinate the group of formandees (Cf. Const. 81; PI 52).

She will be assigned by the Major Superior with the deliberative vote of her council (Cf. Const. 105).

The community where the novitiate resides has to be especially formative; its testimony has to be stimulus as a point of reference for the novices and support for the formator. It is convenient the novice Mistress has a formation team.<sup>10</sup> (Cf. Const. 85)



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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Page 103 of this GPF

## **7.4. TEMPORARY PROFESSED SISTERS**

The Juniorate is the last stage of the initial formation, where integral formation is continued and formandees become incorporated in the communities; the Junior sister clarifies and deepens her personal charism within the historical project of the Congregation; she unifies her life in the personal love of Jesus Christ and self-giving to the Kingdom of God according to the spirit of the Congregation in order to make a definite option for Jesus through the perpetual profession.

- Through the formation process, the Junior sister manifests the God's mercy she experiences in her life, with gratuitous personal love as God's child, loved and liberated by Christ. Through it all, she feels called to discover his suffering face in the world and to carry out the mission according to the Claretian Charism.
- The Junior sister continues accompanied in her personal process and integration in the apostolic community. She is helped to make synthesis of the formation in all the aspects of her life, her experiences and acquired knowledge, in view of her preparation for the perpetual profession. This accompaniment, by the person responsible for it, has to be balanced, without falling in extremes: prolonging novitiate type of relationships. The

sister in charge should not leave alone or rely on other means delegating this responsibility.

- During this stage, whether academic or other courses are being pursued, studies must be continued in biblical, dogmatic and pastoral theology, and in particular theology of consecrated life and the Charism of our Institute.
- The study and deepening of the spirit of the Constitutions, History of the Congregation and documents of our Founders, must take place in the context of the life and the mission of the community, leading to a stronger sense of identity.
- The newly acquired knowledge, the experience of apostolic life, the practice of uniting action and contemplation help to strengthen the sense of congregational belonging with dedication and joy. This leads the sister to become a woman in love with Christ, capable of assuming with responsibility and evangelical criteria the tasks of the community and its mission.
- The community in which the Junior sister is inserted must create a propitious climate that facilitates the dialogue where she can express herself with freedom and simplicity.

During this period of temporary vows, there has to be a period of time dedicated to more intense formation



and accompanied by the respective person in charge.  
(Cf. Dir. 184. 185)

Before the Perpetual Profession there should be a period or periods of preparation with a personalized project, that articulates the essential aspects of our Claretian vocation.

Cf. Const. 94 - 99; Dir. 169 - 189.

### ***OBJECTIVE***

**At the end of this stage the sister has strengthened and personalized her Claretian vocation, has continued her growth, integrating and consolidating the experience of God, fraternity and mission according to the Claretian style, and has reaffirmed her option for Jesus Christ with all her heart and forever. The community that has accompanied her, confirms it and welcomes her.**

### ***CRITERIA TO INITIATE THIS STAGE***

Required for the first profession:

1. Prayer life progressively strengthened.
2. Practice of the vows according to our Charism.
3. Good character for the community and apostolic life.

4. Clear understanding of religious and Claretian life.
5. Sense of identity, belonging and love for the Congregation.
6. Sense of Church expressed in fidelity and love for her.
7. Intellectual and working capacity.
8. Christian simplicity and joy.
9. Sufficient affective maturity and a demonstrated process of growth.
10. Capacity for friendship and solitude.
11. Clear freedom of option and fidelity in the commitments.

To have made the first profession.

## ***INTEGRAL FORMATION***

The personal project in this stage has to be a privileged instrument that guides the sister to integrate and to strengthen the fundamental elements of Claretian living and helps her to "not to depend on times and events". (Const. 97)

### ***Human growth***

1. To work on one's interpersonal relationships, friendship, affectivity, sexuality and to integrate them with the experience of solitude.

2. To promote critical thinking through the practice of reading/interpreting reality from the perspective of faith.
3. To practice sports to help to develop physical integration.
4. To learn to confront personal processes, crisis, and conflicts as opportunities to grow.
5. To promote teamwork skills and learn to work with sense of complementarity.
6. To look at the future with serenity and to strive with hope to create it.
7. To deal with the clash between their idealism and reality.
8. To creatively dedicate time to relaxation and recreation.
9. To remember with gratitude our own personal history, seeing God's presence in it.
10. To offer one's talents and limitations with joy and gratitude to the service of the Gospel.
11. To continue to study a foreign language.
12. To cultivate the necessary attitudes for cultural and intergenerational dialogue.

### ***Following Jesus***

1. To continue fomenting an affective relationship with Jesus; following a pedagogy of prayer proper of the contemplative person in the action.
2. To cultivate in the daily rhythm of prayer, familiarity with God in all the aspects of life. This

- way of praying springs from daily life and it is being “translated” into a way of life.
3. To discern life’s events in the light of God’s Word.
  4. To exercise concrete commitment to poor people.
  5. To be passionate for Jesus, to assume the Cross and the conflicts as ways of becoming one with Him in the paschal mystery.
  6. To continue practicing daily examination in an attitude of discernment.
  7. To provide solid spiritual theological formation.
  8. To live with joy the celebration of the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and the Liturgy of the Hours.

### ***Claretian identity and belongingness***

1. To have balance between prayer, community life, apostolate, study, work, and rest.
2. To keep alive the attitudes and missionary availability to evangelize in different cultures.
3. To continue deepening in the Congregational Charism and to own it.
4. To grow in the sense of belonging to the Congregation, through commitment with the community. To participate actively in community.
5. To assume the responsibility of self-formation.
6. To live the evangelical counsels with special love for poverty as way of witnessing.
7. To complete the professional formation and to put it at the service of the Kingdom of God.
8. To experience taking responsibility for an apostolate carried by the Congregation, being

- sent by the community and inserted in the local Church. To intensify commitment and the apostolic dimension being in touch with the reality of those who suffer.
9. To be updated on current events of the universal and local Church, and to work in concrete ways for its continuous renewal.
  10. To integrate Mary's presence in one's own vocational journey as the "Great Sign."
  11. Commitment based on the evangelical option for social justice and integrity of creation.
  12. Responsibility and creativity in living out the Charism.

The synthesis of the opinions given by the community members for the profession and renewals can become one of important means for the personal assessment in this stage. It is positive that Major Superior, formator or the sister who accompanies, may have a dialogue with the formandee about it.

***PLACE:***

Juniorate house - or another community (Cf. Dir. 185).

***DURATION:***

Two years of special accompaniment ordinarily in one house destined for it. The modalities will adjust to the necessities of formandees and the situation of each Entity.

For the other years, the formandees will be inserted in the apostolic and fraternal life of any community. (Cf. Const 95 - 96; Dir 185. 189)

The major Entity will adapt the plan of this stage to the formative necessities of each sister, taking into account the opinion of the Superior General.

***PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS STAGE:***

Must be a sister capable of understanding and to give orientation the Junior sisters in the ways of the Spirit, in their studies, apostolic work, and integration in the community.

She will be assigned by the Major Superior with the deliberative vote of her Council (Const 105; Dir. 203).

While integrating in the communities, the Junior sister will be accompanied by the Superior or another sister assigned by the Major Superior. It is important to foster mutual communication between the Junior sister and the Prefect de Formation.

## **8. ONGOING FORMATION**

The Formation is a process that continuous along a lifetime (Cf. VC 66; SAC 15; Const. 101). After the Perpetual Profession, what we define as " Ongoing Formation", prolongs in the time the dynamisms initiated and assumed in the first stages, maintaining the person in the attitude of discernment and conversion generating, at the same time, in the sister constant openness to learn and readiness for changes.

It is carried out through the ordinary and extraordinary activities departing from the responsibility of self-formation, included in the personal project of life. It is promoted starting from community planning at local, Entity's and general level.

It must embrace all the dimensions of the personality and it is organized in time according to the possibilities and priorities, either personal or congregacional.

As the whole formation, the ongoing formation begins in the mystery of the call of God to follow Jesus and his invitation to creative fidelity, always new. It can never leave apart the experience of God. From there, it is oriented to each sister's constant renewal and of

our communities, according to the Gospel and the Charism, within each concrete historical context.

It must further the access to contents, spaces and reflection means, exchange, reading of the reality, to favor that the Congregation lives new in practice rather than in doctrine, and the sisters can fulfil their mission with appropriate preparation.

Cf. Const. 100 -103; Dir. 96. 118. 190 -194.

### ***OBJECTIVES:***

**To promote the self-formation attitude in fidelity to the action of the Spirit, to the process of congregational renewal and to the challenges of the mission.**

**To help to live out the Claretian consecration in an active and responsible way in the attitude of discernment and conversion.**

**To impel a continuous growth of the identity of each sister in sense of congregational belongingness.**



## **8. 1. MEANS OF INTEGRAL FORMATION IN GENERAL**

### ***At personal level***

- To deepen our incarnated experience of God progressively in the reality, so we may know how to give evangelical and evangelizing responses to the different situations that we are living.
- It is important that we all have a serious organization of our spiritual life. To this purpose the project and personal examination or other forms can help to impel our Claretian life (Cf. Dir. 190).

The Personal Project supposes a reflection of our life and a desire of improving on the paths the Spirit leads us. When discovering our achievements and limits, we make the effort to strengthen us or to overcome them. This will keep us in a process of ongoing growth.

It must be done out of the personal, community and apostolic reality, detecting what helps us to live faithfully, and what not so; what supposes displeasure or satisfaction.

It must also include a doctrinal frame which supposes to keep in mind a common project of Claretian life (Constitutions, Directory...) as well as the community and provincial project.

Starting from these two bases we must point out the

- **OBJECTIVE** - realistic and easy to evaluate - that responds to what we need more in the current moment.
  
- **ACTION LINES AND MEANS**
  - o They may include: personal identity, discernment, congregational identity, consecration, community, mission and formation contents.
  
  - o They can be also organized according to the different aspects of our life: incarnated spirituality, community, mission and formative contents.

*The following outline of the personal project can be useful.*

### **1. My current situation**

- At the level of my relationship with God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (prayer life, experience of the presence and providence of God in the events of my life).
  
- At the level of the relationship with myself (evaluation of the self-knowledge and self-acceptance; concretely expressed).

- At the level of relationships (community, activity and apostolic collaborators, family, friendships, affections).

## 2. Objectives

In the light of the prayer: **point out objectives** that I perceive as calls of the Lord in these three fields of the life: relationship with Him, with me, with others - community, mission.

What attitudes should I further or transform, with the help of God?

To find two or three **biblical texts** with those I feel identified and I see reflected in them this call of the Lord. They will be my light and guide in this time.

## 3. Means

To point out **concrete means** that I see suitable and I intend to put in practice:

What formation means will I look for so that they serve me as support?

- in the relationship field with God
- in relationship with myself
- in relationship with others - community, mission.

Each sister will assume the items of the project that are more appropriate to her necessities. It is not necessary to include them all, neither always the

same ones. Every year they may be different priorities. We point out some important ones:

- ***Human growth***

- family experience
- qualities
- deficiencies
- aspirations
- reflection capacity, integration
- critical spirit
- to know the relativity of things and events
- availability
- self-control
- self-formation
- relationship

- ***Following Christ in attitude of discernment***

- preparation to the attitude of discernment
- desire of configuration with Christ
- practice in important situations
- daily practice; necessity of confrontation or accompaniment
- spirit of the Beatitudes
- acceptance of the Cross
- reading of the presence of God in my life

- ***Congregational identity***

- evangelical counsels: poverty, obedience, chastity
- sense of belongingness

- identification with the Charism and community
- collaboration
- appreciate the knowledge of the Founders, congregational doctrine, history and mission

- ***Community***

- help for the sisters to grow in fidelity
- participation attitude independently of the sympathies
- formation place
- support for the elder sisters
- each sister's appreciation

- ***Mission***

- Knowledge of the reality of today's world
- apostolic commitment
- integration in the local Church
- acceptance of the limitations
- commitment to the solidarity, justice, peace and integrity of creation

Contents to keep in mind in this period (readings, studies, searches).

***At level of the community:***

The community must be the habitual place of ongoing formation (Cf. Const. 102; Dir. 51. 190). For it:

1. The community planning assumes the ongoing formation as vital attitude in all human, Christian and Claretian dimensions; for this purpose it sets up concrete activities.
2. It evaluates the planning and their ongoing formation, promoting attitudes which favor the participation of all.
3. It looks for spaces to be enlighten by the Word of God in front of the concrete historical events, with creativity and missionary boldness (weekly sharing of the Word, *Lectio Divina*, recollections).
4. It strive for to know and to read critically the processes that generate new poverty and to respond to them out of the JPIC commitment.
5. It looks, in discernment, for creative responses to the challenges that the living out the announcement of the Gospel gives in each local Church in which we are inserted.
6. The community questions itself about the inculturation of its apostolic service and solidarity with the poor.

***At the level of the major Entity:***

*To promote appropriate forms of ongoing formation:*

1. Courses or community gatherings, should be programmed so that the Claretian life is intensified and strengthened.
2. Suggested formative materials provided by the Prefecture of the Entity.
3. Spiritual retreat programmed in some occasion, for the whole Entity.
4. Publications, formation courses, theological studies, pastorals trainings, etc...
5. Missionary exposures or experience of insertion as means of renewal in the Claretian life. They should be planned and evaluated at level of the Governance and with the sister.

### ***To encourage in the communities***

1. The promotion and the evaluation of the section of ongoing formation in the communities planning.
2. The dialogue with each sister on this issue, especially when major Superior's visitation.

### ***At level of the General Governance:***

*To encourage the Entities so that the formation may be intensified:*

1. In the canonical visitations of the Superior General - or her Delegate - through the evaluation of the planned formation activities and the dialogue with each sister on this aspect.
2. During the visits from the General Prefecture of Formation promoting and participating in the activities of ongoing formation, on the level of communities, regions or of Entity.
3. In coordination with the prefects of the Entities, through the materials, subsidies, letters, motivating the formation as an attitude of life.

*To promote spaces and activities of ongoing formation*

1. Motivating and organizing courses of ongoing formation at general level or among Entities.
2. Welcoming and accompanying the sisters in periods of renewal in Rome or other houses as convenient.





## **8. 2. THREE SPECIALLY IMPORTANT PERIODS**

### ***FIRST YEARS after PERPETUAL PROFESSION***

Decisive period to orient capacities toward the integration and fulfilment of the consecration in the personal, community and Claretian apostolic level (5 to 10 years after the perpetual profession).

#### ***At personal level:***

The sister must realistically adapt her personal project suitable with the new rhythm of life. The practice of the discernment and the accompaniment are important means that can help her:

1. To confront positively the circumstances of the new demands of the apostolate and/or difficulties in studies.
2. To be active and constructive independently of the more or less complex communities she is inserted.
3. To respond with fidelity, out of the discernment in the time of the professional and apostolic success, as well as in possible conflict or difficulty in dialoguing with the society, sometimes not very sensitive, and even scornful of our values.

4. To strive to not fall neither in the activism neither in the self-establishment.
5. To be aware of the necessity of support, of accompaniment, to integrate possible crisis facing weaknesses or not foreseen limitations.

***At the level of the community:***

1. The fraternal help of the community as well as of the superior is very important in this period (Cf. PI 27).
2. The community that lives the values of the Kingdom of God is open to welcome, to encourage, to guide and to further the capacities and the sisters' initiatives and even letting them be a source of revivification (Cf. Const. 35-40).

***At the level of the Entity:***

1. The desire of continuous self-formation of the sisters should be promoted and accompanied.
2. The formation must balance the professional, theological, pastoral and spiritual level.
3. If possible, formation encounters will be planned responding to the characteristics of this stage.

## **MIDDLE AGE SISTERS**

Important period for what the realism and maturity in the living out the vocation get bigger. (Cf. PI 66-67)

It can be time of more balance of the person and of grace, but it has risks:

- The realism can degenerate in bitterness
- Loss of ideals and vocational motivations
- Affective difficulties
- Crisis of faith and of prayer
- The activism can become a loophole (Cf. PI 70).

### ***At personal level:***

1. To meditate and to look for the most convenient means so that the spirituality may respond to this stage of life. It should be stated in the personal project of life.
2. To deepen the experience of God and to live this stage with its richness that impels toward the fullness in love and brings to centre the whole existence in the Lord.
3. To accept that the interpersonal help and the spiritual accompaniment are very necessary so

that those difficulties become elements for human Christian and Claretian growth,

***At the level of the community:***

1. Importance of the community accompaniment and of the friendly climate.
2. The community should give space to the personal responsibility.

***At the level of the major Entities and General Governance***

The **Courses of Ongoing Formation** are specially suitable. The duration and form will be adapted to the necessities of the sisters and of the Congregation (Cf. Const. 103; Dir. 190 -193; PI 71).

## ***THIRD AGE SISTERS***

Period privileged by the depth of the experience of faith, of the detachment, of love and of fullness in hope. But it is not an easy period and it requires a previous preparation.

### ***At personal level:***

The self-formation is necessary to get ready to make the transition to this age without excessive traumas. This self-formation requires:

1. Good sense to discover that the physical strength diminishes, but the experience of this age brings to better understanding, objectivity and serenity.
2. Awareness that the apostolic mission is not only tied to the activity and external effectiveness, but mainly, to the living out the consecration till the end. (Cf. Const. 61. 68. 70)
3. Assume with fraternal sense, and even with spiritual maternity that younger sisters carry out more active functions.
4. To know how to take over other works up to the measure of our possibilities and energy.
5. To further the capacity of deep closeness with God and of fruitful solitude, without stopping the work that is possible.

***At the level of the community:***

1. To keep in mind the wealth these older sisters contribute with and to be attentive to their necessities.
2. To look for means so that they may feel integrated in the life and mission of the community with activities appropriate to their possibilities.
3. The youngest sisters must be sensitive for what with their vitality, affection and dedication, they can help the older sisters.

***At the level of the major Entity:***

The Prefecture of Formation must program some activities appropriate to that age, to be carried out in their own communities or in another place, according to the possibilities.

## **8. 3. SOME SPECIAL FORMATION EXPERIENCES**

### **COURSES OF RENEWAL**

#### **PURPOSE:**

- To renew the personal self-giving to Christ, to better serve the people.
- To rediscover the value of the vocation looking at the past experiences in the light of the Word of God, of the Church and of the congregational spirit.
- To renew the person for the community life (Cf. Dir. 192; PI 70).

#### **MEANS:**

- The prayer and the intensified liturgical life.
- Study and reflection on the congregational doctrine.
- Deepening of the biblical and pastoral theology.
- Silence, to fraternal sharing that favors the faith-based reading of the experiences (Cf. Dir. 192).
- Apostolic contact with some marginal realities of our world.

The criteria and dynamizing axles of the Claretian formation that are common for all the stages of life

must be applied in a convenient way in these renewal courses<sup>11</sup>.

**TIME:**

They can be carried out:

- During a period of time of 3 - 9 months.
- During a whole year.

In their planning it should be also kept in mind the purpose and means that the Directory states for these courses.

**MISSIONARY EXPOSURES**

The missionary insertion for a determined period of time can be another form of formation experiences as means for renewal of Claretian Missionary identity, to be more aware of social and ecclesiastic situation.

It is convenient to promote these initiatives in, so called, mission places, slum areas, shantytown and marginal situations. They should be planned with the concrete person, to accompanied and evaluated.

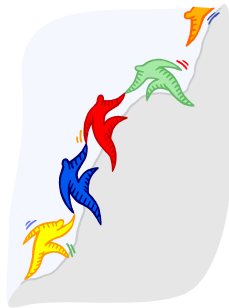
**TIME:**

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Page 103 of this GPF.



Their duration can be variable and it must always proposed in coordination and appropriate planning.



## 9. SOME ORIENTATIONS FOR THE FORMATION TEAM

"To make that the formation communities, in the first stages, constitute true teams that they may help to discern the formative processes of the youth." (XV Gen. Chap. p. 39. 5-6)

According to our Doctrine's statements, it is convenient in the formation communities to be the **formation team** to help in the formation task (Cf. Dir. 197. 201). The XV General Chapter re-proposes this necessity.

It is a small group of sisters who collaborate with the Responsible sister in the formation together assuming the task of programming, undertaking and evaluating the formation.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To unite and to elaborate the formation criteria, according to the GPF appropriate to the formandees.
- To evaluate them periodically out of the process of growth of the formandees.

- To evaluate the formation in the community and of the formation team.
- To participate in the tasks sharing respecting the role of the Responsible sister in each stage.

***Important to keep in mind:***

- Before creating a team it is necessary to work to build a base of fraternity and mutual trust to dialogue and to collaborate.
- The sisters of the team should assume the shared responsibility in the formation task without replacing the role of the Sister in charge.
- In the evaluation the confidentiality should be kept in all concerning the formandees.
- The team should be accompanied by the Major Superior.

***Who does assign the Team?***

The team is established by the major Superior after dialoguing with the Responsible sister and the sisters who may be a part of it.

In small communities, where it is not possible to create a formation team, the formator should promote

an active collaboration in the formation task. It can be favored by the common elaboration of programmes of the formation stages, the collaboration in the formative activities; the reading and the study of the GPF.

The unity of criteria and mutual support should be always fostered.



## CONCLUSION

This General Plan of Formation is an instrument dedicated to each one of those who form the Congregation. The Word of God and the changing reality urge us to live and to respond with passion and creativity to the call of the Lord.

"If, indeed, the consecrated life is in itself 'a progressive assimilation of Christ's feelings', (VC 65) it seems evident that such a path won't be able to finish but will last a lifetime, to commit the whole person, heart, mind and strengths (Cf. Mt 22, 37), and to make her similar to the Son who donated himself to the Father for the humanity. Conceived in this way the formation, is not only a pedagogic time of preparation to the vows, rather it represents a theological way of thinking the same consecrated life which is in itself formation never finished, "participation in the Father's action who, by means of the Spirit, infuses in the heart... the feelings of the Son " (SAC 15).

## Abbreviations

<b>CIC</b>	– Codex of the Canon Law
<b>PI</b>	– Potissime Institutioni
<b>CnU</b>	– Congregavit nos in Unum
<b>VC</b>	– Vita Consacrata
<b>NMI</b>	– Novo Millennio Ineunte
<b>SAC</b>	– Starting Afresh from Christ
<b>Aut.</b>	– Autobiography of Mother Antonia París
<b>EPC</b>	– Epistolario San Antonio Maria Claret
<b>Const.</b>	– Constitution
<b>Dir.</b>	– Directory
<b>GPF</b>	– General Plan of Formation
<b>Gen. Chap.</b>	– General Chapter

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