

FORMATION GUIDE



Brothers of the Holy Family

**FORMATION GUIDE
OF THE
BROTHERS OF THE HOLY FAMILY**

ROME 2020

PRESENTATION

The call that the Lord makes to some to follow him in a closer way, in the style of the first disciples, requires the response of the person who feels called. A vocation is a response to the Lord's free call, which is discovered and embraced when we open our hearts and welcome God's presence in our lives. This dynamic of vocational openness and response requires a long process of discernment, formation and maturation. In this process, although the main subject is the person himself, the Institute also has the duty and the right to form its members as the depository of the charism received. Therefore, the Institute establishes and follows a program that guarantees mediation, formation and discernment.

The *Formation Guide* of our Institute, published in 1998, responds to these principles. This *Formation Guide* has been well received by the Brothers from the time of its publication to the present. The formation houses have valued it and followed it as an important reference document during these years. Its implementation has been a valuable orientation for vocation promotion and formation. It is a document that continues to mark the principles, objectives and means that are made concrete in the Provincial Plans of Formation, in the programs and projects of the formation houses and in the performance of formation tasks.

The meeting of formators of the Institute, organized by the General Council and held in September 2016 in Sigüenza (Spain), requested an update of the *Formation Guide*. This revision was to take into account the new orientations of the Church and the Institute, the contributions of the human sciences, the adaptation to the times and cultures and the inclusion of the positive experiences which have been made in formation. The General Council opened a process for its revision in which the Centre of Spirituality, the Provincial Commissions for Vocations and Formation and some formators participated. The new text gathers together a good part of the contributions that have been suggested from the different areas. At the same time, the orientations of the Church, the new documents of the Institute, Letter No. 19 of Brother Juan Andrés Martos on Formation, the practices that have become habitual in the formation houses and in

the Provinces and the different realities of the Institute were taken into account.

Some of the aspects included or extended are: the importance of the family in the vocation, the identity of the religious Brother, personal knowledge, the contribution of the human sciences, the spirituality of the Institute, the concept of the Sa-Fa Family, formation in new technologies and ecology, the appreciation of cultures, the global vision of the Institute and the missionary spirit.

The process of revising the Guide has not only been intended to incorporate the new or emerging, but has also served as a review of the practice of formation. In this sense, some ideas have been gathered which may correct the deficiencies detected or insist on what has been seen as more essential. Some of the concepts to be intensified are: the care of vocational promotion, the identity of the Brother, the following of a basic program of studies, the value of listening to the Word of God, the deepening of one's own spirituality, the importance of the formative community, the care of personal accompaniment, the support of mission experiences or the concept of common mission and of a charism shared with the Sa-Fa Family, among others. The meetings of formators, at whatever level, should give continuity to this review in order to improve, strengthen or include what is considered appropriate.

Formation is an essential theme in consecrated life. Our Institute must give primary value to vocation promotion and formation because our future depends on new vocations and on the formation of the Brothers (cf. C 153). As an Institute, we should be more involved in the animation of new vocations; this is an aspect to be worked on with more commitment and with a greater sense of community. It is a theme that challenges us in all cultures. Likewise, formation has become a complex task in a globalized world. On a general level, we understand formation as an evolutionary and totalizing process of the person where all the aspects that make up the human being are integrated. But formation to the consecrated life must propose to the candidate a "form" that constitutes a new identity, based on identification with Christ in accordance with the charism of the Institute.

In formation, therefore, concepts such as the following of Christ, the sense of consecration, the personal assimilation of the vows or spiritual dynamism must be worked on. These are all elements that define consecrated life. But, in addition, living one's vocation is also a call to

follow the charism of a Founder and of an Institute which updates it at every moment. The present Guide insists on formation in the charismatic elements proper to our Institute. Achieving an identification with Brother Gabriel and the Holy Family will help to understand the concrete expressions of spirituality, spirit and mission. A good integration in the Institute includes interiorizing and personalizing the essential elements of consecrated life and the elements proper to the Nazarene and Taborinian charism.

The Guide presents vocation promotion as a preliminary work and an indispensable starting point for the subsequent formation processes. Vocation promotion is an activity to be taken care of throughout the Institute. It invites us to become aware of what responsible vocational animation should be on the part of the Provinces and communities. The new text presents vocational promotion as a process to be followed in which many agents are involved and introduces some practices that are having positive results. It is also open to the reception of adult vocations with their own particular characteristics.

The Guide gives great importance to the figure of the formator as an accompanier. His mission is to collaborate with the action of God the Trinity. At the same time, he conveys the beauty of following Christ with the particular form of our charism. It is an important mediation that he must carry out between two liberties: that of God who calls and that of the subject who responds. The formator becomes more and more experienced as he acquires experience in the journey of human and spiritual growth in the midst of his formees. He lives his own process of formation which guarantees him the necessary elements to be a master of the spirit and an accompanier of human development. The formator is presented in the Guide in the context of a formative community that ensures a proactive and motivating environment characterized by family spirit.

The Guide presents formation as a lifelong process. Thus, initial and ongoing formation are integrated. We insist on creating in all the Brothers a disposition to allow themselves to be formed at all times as a requirement of creative fidelity to the Lord's call (VC 37). The Guide dedicates Chapter 6 to ongoing formation. At this time it has a particular importance in the process of revitalizing the life of the Institute and for the good exercise of the mission in a changing and pluralistic time.

Therefore, we must overcome the idea that this Guide is a document intended for formation houses. Rather, we must understand it as a process that involves each Brother, each Community and each Province, because in these three spaces ongoing formation must be organized and deepened. The formation will be different according to the stages of life, the cultures and the times, but in any case a positive attitude is needed to let oneself be formed.

In the context of the Sa-Fa Family, the *Formation Guide* is a document that should be related to the *Plan of Formation of the Nazarene Fraternities*, the Provincial Plans of Formation of the different stages, the Provincial Plan of Ongoing Formation and the different plans for the laity of the Sa-Fa Family. For years now, there has been an insistence on the joint formation of Brothers and Laity, an experience that is becoming more and more common and which the *Formation Guide* values as a richness for growing together.

Taking care of one's vocation is a personal responsibility but also a community responsibility and that of the whole Institute. We are all invited to enter into the formative dynamic that this *Formation Guide* of the Institute proposes to us and to make the text come to life and life in abundance.

The General Council

12 June 2020

1. THE FORMATION OF THE BROTHER OF THE HOLY FAMILY

1.1. MEANING OF FORMATION

The person in formation is a being in relation called into communion with nature and with culture, with other persons, with self and with God.

Formation is the path which each candidate and each brother follows to fulfil himself as a person, conforming himself to Christ by the “Consecration of his life to God in the Church according to the charism of the Institute” (C 2).

It is a question of a process of growth both personal and communitarian which is gradual, continuous, and unifying, which seeks the conversion of the person to the form of life that Jesus chose for himself and which he began to live at Nazareth with Mary and Joseph.

The formation proper to the Brothers of the Holy Family leads gradually to identification with the charism of Brother Gabriel “the Founder, the father and the first member, always alive and present in the religious family of the Brothers” (C 3).

This formation path is for the development of the vocation which itself is a loving call from God and a generous response from the one who intends to live uniquely in order to do the will of the Father, as “Christ in his family life with Mary and Joseph” (C 6).

“Formation then is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women” (VC 66).

1.2. GOALS OF FORMATION

The formation of the Brothers of the Holy Family intends to:

- “form persons in whom, human, religious, professional and apostolic values are joined together in a balanced way;
- promote unity of life;
- obtain men who are really free and mature in Jesus Christ, capable of building up the community;
- unify the Brother’s project of life with that of the Founder, to assure his identity as Brother of the Holy Family” (C 153).

1.2.1. Promoting configuration with Christ

The central objective which illuminates and orients the whole formation process is to promote union with and conformity to Christ, according to the charism of the Brothers of the Holy family.

Taking into account that “the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ as set forth in the Gospels” (PC 2), formation seeks to assist more and more closely the following of Christ poor, chaste and obedient in his total consecration to the Father and the Kingdom. From this point of view, formation becomes “a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father and with respect to humanity” (VC 65).

In keeping with our charism, this process gradually acquires some characteristic traits which are inspired by the life of Jesus at Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. The Holy Family thus becomes, as happened in the life of Brother Gabriel, the model and the source of inspiration which unifies and orients our complete personal existence.

Since “consecration inevitably implies mission” (EE 23), formation seeks progressive identification with the mission of Christ which is expressed in the mission proper to the Brother. He thus becomes a “living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting” (VC 22). “In particular, the Religious Brother, make visible in the Church the face of brother Christ, ‘firstborn among many brothers’ (Rom 8:29), creator of a new brotherhood which he established with his teaching and with his life” (IMRBC 15), according to the charism of our Institute.

1.2.2. Living communion in the Church

Our following of Christ takes place in the Church, within an ecclesiology of communion, in which the “the manifold charisms of their respective Institutes are granted by the Holy Spirit for the good of the entire Mystical Body” (VC 47) The charism of Brother Gabriel, lived and developed in different cultures and historical periods, is consequently richness for the whole people of God.

This is why formation has a clear and precise ecclesial dimension and it allows the person “to understand and love his belonging to the Church and to better discover the meaning of his vocation” (C 155). “So that religious may be able to live their vocation in a concrete and effective

way in the local Church and for the local Church to which they are sent, according to the mission of their institute” (CDRL 17).

This aspect of formation has particular characteristics for the Brothers, inspired by the ecclesial experience of Brother Gabriel and in the history of the Institute. Throughout the whole process of formation there develops the sense of Church-communion and commitment to her in love in the same way as Br. Gabriel lived it. His simple manner and devotedness to the service of the Church inspires the Brothers during the various stages of formation.

In this way, by helping us to grow in keeping with our charismatic identity, the formation journey of the Institute is useful to the whole ecclesial community which thus profits from the gift of the Holy Spirit once made to our Founder.

“The fraternity of Religious Brothers is an encouragement for the whole Church, because it makes present the Gospel value of fraternal relationships of equality in the face of the temptation to dominate, to search for the best place or to exercise authority as power: ‘You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, for you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. You must call no one on earth your father, since you have only one Father who is in heaven. Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one Teacher, the Christ’ (Mt 23:8-10)” (IMRBC 7).

1.2.3. Assimilating the charism of the Institute

Formation helps to attain gradual identification with the project of life of the Institute which actualises and develops, in the course of time, the charism of Brother Gabriel.

The candidate sharing our religious life discovers, little by little, that the project of life expressed in our Constitutions is his own project, and he accepts it gradually as his own, until he acquires a deep sense of belonging.

The Brother, in his turn, deepens more and more his personal identity as Brother of the Holy Family, interiorising the charism of the Institute. Growing in the charism leads to identification with its essential elements and passing from knowledge to the experience of personal and community life.

Formation helps us go forward along the path of discovery and experience of our proper spirituality. In this way each day leads to closer to the “mystery of Nazareth where Jesus began to accomplish what he would later preach” (C 7). The Gospel, contemplated from there and from the experience of Brother Gabriel, thus becomes the supreme norm of life, transforming it from within.

In the same way, formation allows to discover as one’s own “the family spirit, the vital core of the Brothers’ spirituality” (C 14), and helps to permeate the whole of one’s personal existence, community life and apostolic activity.

All this will lead the Brother to acquire a congregational culture that makes him identify with the Institute.

1.2.4. Preparing for community life and mission

A goal of formation is also to prepare for mission, that is to say, for continuing the mission of Jesus, actualised and lived in community according to our charism.

This formation is carried out with our eyes on Nazareth, where Jesus, Mary and Joseph lived available to the saving will of the Father. The example of Brother Gabriel, who lived always in an open attitude to the needs of the Church of his time, is also followed.

Formation will help the formee discover that the Lord is consecrating him in community and sending him out to communicate his mystery of love and communion. That is, to be witnesses by our consecration of the life of Christ in his total dedication to the Father and to the Kingdom.

This mission is carried out through the mission of the Institute, in “Christian education, catechesis and liturgical animation” (C 16), among children, youth and families.

1.2.5. Permanently renewing the Institute

“The adequate renewal of the institutes depends to a maximum extent on the formation of their members” (PC 18). Our plans of formation will seek to revitalize the life and mission of the Institute, its Provinces and communities. This will allow us to live in creative fidelity to God’s will and to respond to the current needs of the Church and the world.

Conscious of the importance of formation, the Institute dedicates its greatest energy to guaranteeing quality formation to its candidates, adapted to our life and mission.

All the Brothers, in their turn, live authentically and with love for the Institute their own process of formation. They seek to assimilate and develop Brother Gabriel's charism so that the vitality of the charism and his personal witness will attract new candidates willing to follow and update it.

1.3. DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION

Formation is a unitary and harmonious process which embraces the whole person. To be complete, "it must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects" (VC 65).

The formative itinerary followed by a Brother of the Holy Family takes into account each of the following dimensions of formation.

1.3.1. Personal dimension

Formation in the Institute is aimed at the fundamental development of the following human values:

- objective knowledge of personal history, ideals, questions and abilities;
- acceptance of one's own person, confidence in oneself and in one's possibilities for personal growth;
- development of affectivity and sexuality that open him to the gift of self in the consecrated life;
- openness to an ideal of life which unifies and motivates, allowing the subject "harmonious development of his faculties and the cultivation of natural virtues (C 154);
- growth in freedom and responsibility so as to become capable of overcoming fears and insecurities and open to a project of life centred on love;
- capacity to overcome joyfully the difficulties and problems which rise up in the course of life, making use of them to grow in maturity from the experience.

1.3.2. Community dimension

"Experts in communion, religious are, therefore, called to be an ecclesial community in the Church and in the world, witnesses and

architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design" (RHP 24).

The construction of the Community is everyone's task and asks for an oblation, generous and mature love that allows to harmonize the community project and the personal project.

Formation helps to mature in:

- recognising the reality of being loved by God and being capable of loving without limit like "persons whom Christ has liberated and made capable of loving as he did" (FLC 21);
- openness to the other accepting him and welcoming him as he really is;
- the ability to grow in dialogue, confidence and friendship, finding "the affective equilibrium indispensable for living in fraternal communion" (C 159);
- overcoming egoism and the need for affirmation by a disinterested love for all, especially the nearest and most needy;
- the willingness to build a fraternity animated by the family spirit and by the virtues proper to our Nazarene spirituality.

1.3.3. Cultural dimension

Formation takes into account the culture of origin of the persons in formation and the diversity of cultures where the Brother is called to live (PI 43). Initial formation is normally carried out in the field of one's own culture.

As it was for Christ, who by his Incarnation assumed human nature without destroying it and lived the religious, cultural and social reality of his people, so the process of formation must be well inculturated, considering that each culture is thereby placed in dialogue with the Gospel in such a way that it is incarnated in the culture of a people and, in its turn, finds there the possibility of expressing itself.

Formation contributes to:

- the growth of the values proper to the culture of the subject in the harmonious development of his personality (Cf. VC 67);
- the search of the means best adapted for incarnating and expressing the Gospel and the FSF charism in the different cultures;

- becoming aware of the limits of all cultures in the light of the Gospel (Cf. PI 91);
- opening oneself to other cultures and to the universal dimension of situations and problems. Fostering inculturation and interculturality;
- discovering nature as a common home and the involvement of human action in the environment.

1.3.4. Christian dimension

Beginning with the reality of baptism which makes man a new creature, “the principal purpose of formation at its various stages, initial and ongoing, is to immerse religious in the experience of God and to help them perfect it gradually in their lives” (CDRL 17).

Formation advances growth in Christian values which stem from baptismal commitment. In particular it helps to develop:

- a life of faith, hope and charity, open to welcoming with humility and confidence the gifts which come to us from God and to respond generously;
- a synthesis between the intellectual, experiential and celebratory dimensions of the faith, integrating harmoniously with the totality of the person’s experiences;
- the ability to cultivate the “warm and personal encounter with the Lord, in the Word of God, prayer, and the Sacraments” (C 155);
- the attitude of seeking and accepting the will of the Father in the concrete circumstances of life, by penetrating the wisdom of the cross;
- openness to the Christian community where each one grows in communion with the others towards “the unity which the Spirit creates” (Eph 4:3);
- the attitude which recognises Christ in others and readiness to come to their aid in their necessities.

1.3.5. Religious dimension

The response to the call of God leads the religious to consecrate himself in a state of life which “is accurately exemplified and perpetually made present in the Church this form of life, which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world” (LG 44). In opening the person to the

values of consecrated life, formation assists with the following of Christ who was virgin, poor and obedient:

- opening to the religious vocation, discovered as an ideal for personal life and welcomed as the truth, goodness and beauty which can give great meaning to existence;
- appreciation of the vocation and mission of the religious Brother in the Church;
- generosity in the total gift to God through a process of “conformity to the Lord Jesus in his total self-giving” (VC 65);
- ability to live the evangelical counsels as expression of consecrated love which matures in unconditional giving for the Kingdom;
- mature and creative commitment in building religious fraternity, sign of unity among men;
- listening to the Word of God and the practice of personal and community discernment based on Gospel criteria and the requirements of the vows;
- progressive identification with the mission of Christ, totally consecrated to the Kingdom in acceptance of the salvific will of the Father.

1.3.6. Charismatic dimension

The path of formation also leads us to incarnate in our lives the mystery of Nazareth and to actualise in us the charism of Brother Gabriel. For that to happen it needs the acquisition of the more specific values of our charismatic identity:

- love for our own vocation as Brothers of the Holy Family, which is “to love the Church, it is to love one’s institute, and to experience the community as one’s own family” (FLC 37);
- ability to welcome the Holy Family as one’s model of personal and community identity;
- commitment to live the Nazareth spirituality and to make the family spirit grow by taking inspiration from it to edify the community and to carry out the apostolate;
- openness towards the person of Brother Gabriel, seeing in him a model for the road towards growth in one’s vocation;

- development of the missionary spirit to respond to the calls of the mission in different parts of the world.

1.4. AGENTS AND MODELS OF FORMATION

The human person is open to reality and to the people who surround him, and through them he builds his life. In the pathway of the following of Christ in the consecrated life, there is a series of persons and groups of people more directly implicated in formation, but it is always the person himself who must always be at the centre of the formative activity.

1.4.1. The action of God

“Since the initiative for religious consecration is in the call of God, it follows that God himself, working through the Holy Spirit of Jesus, is the first and principal agent in the formation of the religious” (EE 47). It is the Spirit who conforms to Christ those whom the father has called to follow his Son in the religious life.

The Holy Spirit who guides us “towards the whole truth” (Jn 16: 13), is he who illumines and draws out the wisdom which allows for the discernment of the vocation and the following of it. He is the interior strength which makes possible true growth, abandoning the ‘old man’ to put on the “new man created according to God” (Eph 4: 24).

He is master of the interior life and the guide along the road of formation. He prays in us, teaches us how to build communion and incites us to mission.

This presence of the Holy Spirit “two fundamental attitudes: humility, which makes one resign oneself to the wisdom of God; and the knowledge and practice of spiritual discernment. It is, in fact, important to be able to recognize the presence of the Spirit in all the aspects of life and of history, and through human mediation” (PI 19).

1.4.2. Live models for identification

a) The Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, as a family, are the model of the identity that Brother Gabriel left to the Brothers who use “every means to unite themselves to their holy protectors through prayer and meditation” (C 1836 a, III). They are at the same time models and agents of formation, being the “reference point” (C 7) for this formation.

The mystery of Trinitarian love, lived at Nazareth, extends throughout the life of the Brothers and the communities. The Holy Family continues to pray, to work, to love in us. Existential openness to the mystery of Nazareth becomes, in this way, a primordial element in our personal and community growth.

“Being often under the humble roof of Nazareth” (NG 607), our being models itself progressively in contemplative openness and conforms itself, day after day, to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They occupy a greater and greater place in our life and make us grow in a particular manner that we may call the Nazareth way.

In the Holy Family the Brothers contemplate “the Virgin of Nazareth, the one most fully consecrated to God” (RD 17). “Having lived with Jesus and Joseph in the hidden years of Nazareth, and present at her Son’s side at crucial moments of his public life, the Blessed Virgin teaches unconditional discipleship and diligent service” (VC 28). The Brothers are open to her maternal action throughout their vocational journey.

b) Brother Gabriel

The personal and community identity of the Brothers has its origin in the charism which grace incited in our Founder. It is also actively present in our formation journey. It lives in each Brother to the extent that each one opens himself to the founding charism and allows it to become an inseparable part of his being.

Throughout formation one deepens one’s understanding of the Founder in whom one discovers “the fundamental characteristics of the Brother of the Holy Family” (C 9). Through the study of his life and his work Brother Gabriel becomes closer and one feels his personal attraction as a stimulant on the path towards growth.

Thus the Founder becomes a model, a friend and an inseparable companion on the formation road of each candidate and each Brother.

In the same way, his apostolic zeal is an inspiring model of the proclamation of the Gospel to respond to the needs of today’s world.

1.4.3. The Church

The Church considers religious life as belonging “undeniably to its life and holiness” (LG 44). She sees in it “one of her essential and characteristic elements, for it expresses her very nature” (VC 29). For

that, she welcomes the charism of each Institute as something which belongs to her and which she must care for.

Our vocation is born in the Church and develops in her. In her heart it finds the food which helps to grow in fidelity to the will of God: the Word, the Sacraments, the liturgy, the community. Our formation helps us to feel Church, to know her, to love her more and more and to serve her in our mission.

“The strongly ecclesial dimension of religious life demands that formation in every aspect be imparted in profound communion with the universal Church” (CDRL 17; cf. PI 21-25). With this spirit of communion, those responsible for formation in the Institute are attentive to the Magisterium which directs them in the work of accompaniment in the process of personal growth of the subjects.

In the Church, the path followed by the Consecrated Life and the orientations given to Religious Institutes, especially those most closely related to ours, such as the Religious Institutes of Brothers, are a stimulus to growth.

All the components of the People of God assist in the formation of its members. The hierarchy in its function of teaching, guiding and sanctification contributes to the growth of the Christian life, while taking into account the characteristics of each charism and each vocation. The laity help us by their witness and remind us of a fundamental dimension of our own vocation as lay people.

1.4.4. The Community, the Institute and the Sa-Fa Family

“Because religious community is a Schola Amoris which helps one grow in love for God and for one’s brothers and sisters, it is also a place for human growth” (FLC 35).

The community should act in such a way that its members find in it “a spiritual atmosphere, an austerity of life, and an apostolic enthusiasm within their community, which are conducive to their following Christ according to the radicalism of their consecration” (PI 27).

“The integral formation of the subject requires a community environment” (C 159). “The very life of the community and its organization provides a formation according to its own charism” (C 160).

Peace, which our motto presents as the fruit of prayer, work and love, is the material and spiritual environment where the growth of each one is possible “in fidelity to the Lord according to the charism of his institute” (PI 27).

Each member of the community is engaged in formation and must assume his proper responsibilities in this task, stimulated to “grow, not only for self but for the good of all” (PI 27).

In its turn, the Institute and each of its Provinces has the responsibility to create the conditions which allow the process of formation to take place. The various leaders take the necessary means so that the formation plans may be applied with quality and efficiency at every stage.

“The lay associates in the Nazarene Fraternities, and the other members of the Sa-Fa Family contribute to the formation of the Brothers through the witness of different vocations united by the same charism and through formation and apostolate activities shared between Brothers and lay people.

To welcome with joy the intuitions and experiences that the laity can contribute to the Nazarene and Taborinian spirituality” (PLI 1.1).

1.4.5. The formee

“To say ‘yes’ to the Lord’s call by taking personal responsibility for maturing in one’s vocation is the inescapable duty of all who have been called. One’s whole life must be open to the action of the Holy Spirit, travelling the road of formation with generosity, and accepting in faith the means of grace offered by the Lord and the Church” (VC 65).

The person of first importance in formation is thus the formee himself. It is over to him to open himself first of all to the values of the vocation, to make them his own and to direct them according to his personal growth (cf. PI 29).

To be a true artisan of his formation he must the attitudes of the disciple, particularly humility and availability.

The formee must fix his eyes above all on Christ, contemplating especially his life in Nazareth, welcoming him as the greatest good and committing himself to follow him his whole life.

Brother Gabriel also becomes a real model and companion on the journey: in his personal journey each one learns from him how to model himself on Christ.

The formee allows himself to be lead and transformed by the Holy Spirit in an attitude of docility and availability. He practises the art of discernment which allows him to discover and accept the plan of God for his life.

The formees must be informed of their rights in relation to possible physical, psychological or sexual abuse to which they may be subjected.

1.4.6. Formators and the formation teams

Although every member of the Institute is engaged in the work of formation, the immediate responsibility falls upon the formators, since God “makes use of human instruments, placing more mature brothers and sisters at the side of those whom he calls” (VC 66).

“Their role varies according to the stage reached by the religious but its main responsibilities are: discernment of God’s action; the accompaniment of the religious in the ways of God; the nourishing of life with solid doctrine and the practice of prayer; and, particularly in the first stages, the evaluation of the journey thus far made” (EE 47).

“Those responsible for formation are carefully chosen.

By means of special formation, both spiritual and pedagogical, they prepare themselves to fulfill their mission” (C 162; cf. PI 30-32).

They must be in possession of theoretical knowledge as well as sufficient experience of:

- the spiritual life;
- the consecrated life;
- the Founder and his charism;
- the Institute, its life and mission; its history and spirituality;
- the human sciences necessary for their work.

They also need the necessary personal qualities which render capable of exercising their mission. Among the most important are:

- the ability to welcome, to listen, to respect and to understand the other, with personal freedom and without being paternalistic;
- the experience of prayer, of the interior life and of discernment;
- the availability and devotedness in practising personal accompaniment;
- the ability to work in a team;
- the adaptation to a changing world.

The formators work together with a “team spirit according to a plan which is progressive and organised” (C 163). They “work together in close union and in a family climate with the young for whom they are responsible” (C 163).

1.4.7. The family

The family is the place where the formation of the person ordinarily begins and where he is awakened to cultural and religious values. Despite the fragility of a good number of situations, through the education of its children, experiences and relationships lived within it the family exercises a major influence in the whole journey of personal formation.

As the domestic Church, the Christian family is the place where the person is initiated into the Christian experience. In it the child awakens to the life of faith, of prayer and of relationships founded in love.

The education received in the family must nurture the various dimensions of the person; to do this it must be positively open to the vocation. “Parents, too, should nurture and protect religious vocations in their children by instilling Christian virtue in their hearts” (PC 24).

Hence the family is fundamental in the developing process of the vocation and in the whole formation journey. Formation plans must not forget this, especially in the initial stages of formation.

Special attention should be given to those in formation who come from particular family realities.

Formators establish adequate contact with the families of their formees. They study the influence they exercise on them in order to understand better what motivates them and to help in their maturing.

They assist families in their difficulties and orient their task of helping their children to discover their vocation. In particular they teach their formees and their families how to accept and overcome the separation which the vocation inevitably entails.

1.4.8. The culture

If we consider that “Man comes to a true and full humanity only through culture” (GS 53), we can affirm that there exists an intimate relationship between culture and formation. Every culture, with its positive and negative elements, powerfully influences people and plays a decisive role in their maturing.

“The Gospel frees the ultimate truth of the values contained in a culture” (PI 91).

Formation helps in discovering and confirming the true cultural values which allow the candidates to grow as persons and as believers, and to become mature in their vocation.

On the other hand, there exist counter-cultural values in the environment which are opposed to the evangelical model of the person, rendering difficult the process of acceptance and assimilation of the Christian message and openness towards vocation. For that, formation must take into account that “every culture should be evangelized, that is to say, purified and healed of the wounds of sin” (PI 91).

In the process of formation these cultural elements are not overlooked and one prepares the candidate to discern them in the light of the Gospel, thus allowing them to grow in the freedom of the children of God and in personal responsibility.

The social realities in which the Institute exercises its mission are culturally different. That requires an effort on the part of the Brothers “to enculturate their own faith within the culture of their origins” (PI 91), and to make incarnate there the charism of Brother Gabriel.

The formators and the candidates must open themselves to the values of each culture, try to know them and critique them and seek out a way to express the riches of the Gospel and of our charism through them.

From our charism we want to respond to the needs of cultures and, likewise, we allow ourselves to be enriched by their values and expressions.

On the other hand, cultural change, which is often very rapid, demands “a formation which is solid and constantly revised” (C 120). It is only in this way that it is possible to respond positively to the fidelity that the Church asks of religious in the domain of human promotion:

- “Fidelity to humanity and to our times.
- Fidelity to Christ and the Gospel.
- Fidelity to the Church and her mission in the world.
- Fidelity to religious life and the charism of one’s own Institute” (RHP 13).

1.5. DYNAMISM AND MEANS OF FORMATION

1.5.1. Personal and group accompaniment

Personal accompaniment is the help given to the candidate, sharing with him his own journey so that he can discern the action of God in his life and respond to it freely and responsibly.

It is a privileged means which allows the candidate to know and to accept himself with greater objectivity, to discover God's plan for him and to open himself to a process of conversion and permanent growth. It does not substitute for the person's own responsibility for his formation but is a help in becoming the chief instrument of this formation.

Personal and group accompaniment should become an instrument of growth for the candidate. It helps to give him a positive sense of his personal history, to his process of human maturity, to reveal his vocation as his ideal of life and to elaborate and evaluate his own plan for following Christ.

The Brothers draw their inspiration from Nazareth which enlightens them in the art of accompaniment. There, they learn to do it by looking at a life shared with love, in listening and in dialogue, with respect and confidence.

Nazareth teaches how to discover God's presence in the reality of everyday life both personal and communitarian and how to respond generously to its calls; how to wait for the growth of each one without pushing through the stages; to accept that everything human can be saved; to promote the maturing of persons in a concrete community characterised by the family spirit.

They also learn from Brother Gabriel's experience who let himself be guided by Bishop Devie and other expert counsellors, and who never stopped accompanying with care the personal growth of his Brothers. Spiritual direction is especially recommended as a means of growth. The Founder especially recommends it and dedicates Chapter XXII of the New Guide (462-494) to it.

1.5.2. The Personal Project and the Community Project

An important means for the formation journey is the personal project and the community project at the various levels (Community, Province, Institute). It answers the need to understand one's life as a journey of maturing and of growth towards fullness.

The personal project begins with knowledge of self and directs the individual towards the development of his own vocation. It includes acceptance of values, the fact of assuming them and the search for the means for gradual growth in keeping with these values.

To be efficacious it requires the ability to know oneself, to accept one's personal history, to learn from experience, to open oneself to growth and trust in God's action.

It must take into account the various stages of the development of the human person: human maturity, life of communion, experience of God, apostolic action, vocational growth. At the same time it must include objectives, means, stages, as well as review and evaluation of the project.

The community project defines the identity and the mission of the community and "helps the Brother to make use of the options and the surest means for living the many aspects of religious life" (GD 12).

Living the Community Project means entering a shared process of programming, implementation and ongoing review.

"The Brothers take into account the Project of Life of the Community in the fulfilment of their personal life" (C 105).

1.5.3. Discernment

Discernment is a process by which the Christian opens himself to knowledge of the will of God for his life. It refers, on the one hand, to the discovery of his own vocation, and on the other, to the constant attitude of seeking the will of God in all the circumstances of life, decided always by the light of the Gospel.

"Spiritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them" (GE 170).

There are different methods, both personal and communitarian, for practising discernment which must be put in place as much by the candidates as by the formators.

On the part of the person in formation certain conditions are necessary:

- an attitude of faith and prayer to open oneself to the Holy Spirit,
- sufficient knowledge of self and the realities which affect the decision,

- ability to transcend self in love and generous disposition for change,
- “willingness to be counselled and directed with a view to discern correctly what is the will of God” (PI 19).

Among formators and in the formative community the following conditions are also necessary:

- knowledge of the candidate’s reality and of the practice of discernment,
- respect for the person and for his rhythm of growth,
- capacity to help the other to know himself, to interpret his history and to open himself to God’s action,
- acting in such a way that the candidate can take responsibility for his own process of maturing.

1.5.4. Prayer, the Word of God and the Sacraments

Formation helps growth in the community which “is formed each day under the action of the Holy Spirit, allowing itself to be judged and converted by the Word of God, purified by penance, constructed by the Eucharist, and vivified by the celebration of the liturgical year” (PI 27).

The person “reaches his maturity in faith, hope and charity, arising from a personal and cordial encounter with the Lord, in the Word of God, prayer, Sacraments and a concern for dependence on the will of the Father in all his activities” (C 155).

a) Prayer

Jesus’ entire life was accompanied by prayer, as well as his Mother’s and Joseph’s. Through prayer they were open to the will of the father and allowed themselves to be led by the Spirit. Prayer was also a constant in the life of Brother Gabriel, who considered it to be “the cornerstone of our Institute” (NG p. xxvii).

For those who have begun to follow Jesus, inspired by the charism of Brother Gabriel, prayer becomes the prime means of interior growth and personal maturity.

In prayer one comes to true wisdom of heart which allows one to know Christ better, “in whom are hidden all the riches of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Thanks to this, one discovers the truth of being son of God, called to grow in the Son. In prayer is revealed one’s own history, both personal and community, as the history of salvation.

Prayer opens us to the action of the Holy Spirit which guides and helps us to grow, by “having the same sentiments as Christ” (Phil 2:5). It gradually transforms our heart making it like that of Jesus, sensitive and open to the needs of our brothers.

The candidate learns to receive the gifts of the Spirit which always “grant us a taste of that true and intimate knowledge of the Lord. Without it we shall not succeed either in understanding the value of the Christian and religious life or in gaining the strength to advance in it with the joy of a hope that does not deceive” (ET 43).

With the conviction that we must “pray always and not be discouraged” (Lk 18:1) throughout the formation journey, one learns the secrets of prayer and makes progress in its practice. Day after day, one acquires this spirit of prayer which directs the entire life of the Brother of the Holy Family, as it directed the life of our Founder.

The liturgy occupies a special place in the formation of prayer. As for Brother Gabriel, the candidate learns gradually to know and to taste the liturgy of the Church, to live it as a vocational journey and to be capable, through it, “to profess and celebrate his faith with interior and exterior freedom with his Brothers and with the People of God” (C 155).

b) The Word of God

Listening to and meditating on the Word of God is a daily encounter with “the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ” (CDRL 8). The Word illumines the Spirit and gives true knowledge to the believer who accepts it with humility.

This Word opens us to contemplation of the mystery of God and of man by introducing us into the mystery of Nazareth where one finds the wisdom which gave light the life of our Founder, and which continues to enlighten the life of each Brother. “The Brothers learn to meditate and to live the Gospel in the light of the mystery of Nazareth” (C 7).

The Word educates and transforms us from within, conforming us to Jesus and making us grow as sons of the Father and as Brothers. In the daily liturgy and meditation Jesus gives himself to us as Word of God, and grows in us in community.

The formation programme of the Institute gradually introduces the study of Holy Scripture and the practice of *Lectio Divina* and in

community listening to the Word. The formators must become masters in the art of prayer and listening to the Word.

c) The Sacraments

Formation helps us to participate each day more intensely in the sacramental life of the Church. Our Founder was particularly sensitive to the source of life which is the living presence of Jesus resurrected in the mist of the Christian community.

The Eucharist, “source and summit of the whole Christian life” (LG 11), is considered by the Brothers as the “heart of the community” (C 132). It introduces us daily to the Paschal Mystery of Christ and becomes the principal nourishment of our life as disciples. It makes us grow in him who is model and goal of our formation and builds a community open to mission.

The sacrament of Reconciliation “through which the Lord restores union with himself and with his brothers” (FLC 14), is a necessary means for continuing to follow Christ. Formation gradually introduces the practice of frequenting this sacrament by teaching it as a means of coming to humble self-knowledge, of continuous growth, and of celebration of progress in the formation journey.

1.5.5. Growth in Nazarene spirituality

Spirituality is the cultivation of spiritual life. Christian spirituality has its origin in the Gospel and is diversified by the multiplicity of the charisms of the Holy Spirit and the diversity of states of life.

The Sa-Fa Family has its own spirituality whose central identity consists in building the person and the community by looking at the Holy Family, according to Brother Gabriel’s intuition. This spirituality has been enriched throughout history and has a constant dynamic character.

To achieve growth and maturation in this spirituality, the following methods are proposed:

- Daily life guided by the “family spirit”.
- The reading and meditation of the Word of God in the light of the mystery of Nazareth.
- The interpretation and discernment of the signs of the times “with Nazarene eyes”.
- Building the community.

- The shared mission.
- Formation according to one's own charism.

The stages of the path of this spirituality are the following:

- The emergence of life in which the joy of the first encounter and the acceptance of the gift are lived.
- The silence of Nazareth where one acquires the deep convictions, the rooting and practice of the virtues that require long times and constant effort.
- The step towards an adult faith, a firm hope and a charity that becomes a total gift.
- The fullness of accepting the gift of being a child of God and relating fraternally to everyone (Cf. SFS chap. IV & V).

1.5.6. Personal and community asceticism

Religious are called to be “witnesses of the Paschal mystery of Christ, the first stage of which necessarily passes through the cross. This passage requires insertion of a daily, personal asceticism into an integral program of formation” (PI 36).

The process of formation is impossible without personal discipline which helps to free the person from his own forms of slavery and allows movement towards the ideal of a freeing life.

The person in formation must, in the first place, open himself to an ideal which he sees as the realisation of his own self. He must be continually conscious of his dependencies and addictions which prevent him from reaching this idea.

Through the exercise of a progressive asceticism freely assumed, he experiences the satisfaction of being able to detach himself from those things which prevent him from reaching what he truly desires. And, at the same time, he can verify that the ideal vocation to which he feels himself drawn is capable of truly satisfying his heart, in a way which far surpasses that which he has abandoned.

Through this process of opening himself to new horizons of freedom, the will is strengthened and the right energy is directed towards a plan of life which is assumed as the fulfilment of his personal existence.

Asceticism also comprises important community aspects such as service, communication, fidelity to community times and agreements.

1.5.7. Study and reading

Study and formative reading carried out according to an organised and progressive plan throughout the stages of initial formation and of the whole of life, are oriented towards forming mature religious as people and who are qualified for our mission. They give the person in formation entry into the contemplation of the mystery of God and man, into questioning his convictions, and opening himself to the cultural reality in which he lives.

Personal maturity requires a harmonious blending between the object of study and life itself. The candidate learns to understand and taste the truth, and at the same time to integrate it into the whole of the experiences which form his personal identity. He practises the art of attaining existential unity between study, prayer and the spiritual life, opening his person to that knowledge which “surpasses all knowledge, the love of Christ” (Eph 3:19).

The study programmes applied in the Institute adapt themselves to the orientations of the Church, to the demands of civil society and to the needs of religious life and the apostolate of the Brothers. They aim at integrating harmoniously the different kinds of study with the goal of finding equilibrium between human, theological, spiritual and professional formation.

Pride of place is given to theological and spiritual formation in the subject matter of study and reading. Their objective is to introduce the candidate to “the experience of God and to help them perfect it gradually in their lives” (CDRL 17). The study of Holy Scripture, theology, the spiritual life, the Founder and the charism of the Institute are given the importance which is their due.

At the same time, preparation for mission requires serious and prolonged study of the human and professional sciences, adapted to the varying cultural realities of the places in which the Brothers exercise their apostolate. The planning of these studies is directed “with a view to responding to the requirements of the apostolic commitments of the religious family itself, in harmony with the needs of the Church” (MR 26).

It is also necessary to initiate the study of the pedagogy of our Institute, characterized from its origins by the «family spirit» which is inspired by the life of Nazareth and the apostolic experience of Brother Gabriel and which continues to be updated today in the Sa-Fa Family.

Study and formative reading, carried out responsibly and with constancy, becomes an important element of formation. Through them the candidate forges his own personality in imitation of Jesus who, in Nazareth, “grew in wisdom and in grace with God and man” (Lk 2:52).

1.5.8. Community life

“A prayerful and dedicated community, building its union in Christ and sharing his mission together, is a natural milieu of formation” (EE 47).

Community life consequently becomes an indispensable element in formation, without which it is impossible to advance along the path of personal maturity.

It must above all help the growth of the spiritual life since the community is “of its nature the place where the experience of God should be able in a special way to come to fullness and be communicated to others” (CDRL 15).

Shared life in community allows for maturing love, passing from “I” to “us” through a process of dying to egoistic self-love to growth in love in communion. The community then becomes “the place where we learn daily to take on that new mind which allows us to live in fraternal communion” (FLC 39).

One must always take into account that the community “deserves to be lived and loved for what it is in the religious life, as the Church conceives it” (PI 26). Each of its members, as Brother Gabriel asked, regards it as his real treasure and feels himself called to “preserve this treasure with much care” (Circ 15), committing himself to building communion without self-interest. In this way fraternal life becomes a privileged instrument of personal maturing and community growth.

The Institute places great importance on this means of formation with attention given to “the Family of Nazareth, a place which religious communities ought often to visit spiritually, because there the Gospel of communion and fraternity was lived in a wonderful way” (FLC 18).

“The formation of the members of the Institute takes place in a family atmosphere. The organisation and the life itself of the community offer a formation according to the charism itself. This formation is enriched by meditation on the mystery of Nazareth and by the healthy traditions of the Institute” (C 160).

Within the community the Superior is first of all responsible for promoting means of growth and of formation.

1.5.9. The apostolic experience

“Throughout the different stages of formation, the subject becomes gradually committed to the apostolic life” (C 157), inspired by the “apostolic zeal” of Brother Gabriel for whom “nothing was painful to him if it was a matter of doing good” (*Life* p. 60).

Taking into account the apostolic dimension of our vocation, this experience is of great importance in our formation journey. At the same time as it witnesses to Christ, it becomes a means of formation.

Apostolic experience allows the subject to acquire great knowledge of the social and ecclesial reality for which we are sent by preparing us to exercise his mission as Brother of the Holy Family.

It must be carried out in conformity with our mission, in keeping with the formation programme at each stage and adapted in accordance with the circumstances of the time and the place.

It needs to be accompanied by a progressive doctrinal, spiritual and pedagogical preparation. It is also the object of suitable accompaniment and periodic evaluation.

The model we must imitate in this area is Brother Gabriel, who “often told the Brothers that their vocation was an apostolate and that they should have ‘zeal’ for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This same ‘zeal’ was to animate them all, so that, filled with this divine fire, they would be concerned to communicate it to the young people who had been entrusted to them by working for it” (*Life* p. 497).

1.6. PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA

1.6.1. Personalization and identification

The formation process takes into account first of all the reality of the person. Each one is called by God to follow a particular and unique plan of growth. He must therefore be respected, valued and cared for as an individual person.

The one in formation is called to “accept in love the responsibility for personal formation and growth, welcoming the consequences of this response which are unique to each person and always unpredictable”

(EE 47). He must become aware of his own reality so as to develop his own human and spiritual possibilities according to God's plan for him. Consequently he will be helped to discover himself as gift from God and to gradually interiorise those values which allow him to grow in keeping with his vocation.

The Institute offers each candidate and each Brother "a solid formation, given progressively in a manner adapted to the person's character and individual aptitudes and in keeping with the circumstances of time and place" (C 153). It provides accompaniment and the means necessary to progress gradually on their vocation path, respecting personal rhythms and modes.

Each one is thus helped to "recognise himself" in the ideal of Brother of the Holy Family and gradually to identify himself with this ideal. We must also encourage him to advance along the path of embodying the values of the model of life expressed in our Constitutions.

This process is not achieved without difficulties. The cross always appears in along the road to personal growth. The formators will help to accept the painful reality and to discover in them the Lord who, through the cross, leads us to real life.

1.6.2. Unity and totality

Formation embraces the whole of the human person, in his personal and complex unity. It must, therefore, be directed at the same time to the fundamental faculties of the person: heart, mind and will.

The faith and ideal of the vocation to which the subject adheres must be perceived in their totality that is to say in their beauty, their truth and their goodness, and as being able to embrace the entire person who accepts them.

The task of the formator is to know how to present them in such a way that they can captivate the person so that he feels called to accept them as his own ideal of life.

This presupposes the ability to teach how to contemplate the objective truth of the faith and of the vocation, to open himself to the attraction they provoke in the heart and to engage his own will in searching them out.

The subject gradually discovers his personal ideal of life according to the specifics of his vocation, and puts all his energy into the path which leads to configuring his personality according to this ideal.

In order to direct his tendencies and human abilities harmoniously towards this ideal, he engages in a double process: the gradual freeing from contrary leanings and the simultaneous affirming of positive tendencies and potentialities.

The formation journey allows him, on the one hand, to open himself to knowledge, acceptance and respect for the values of the vocational ideal, and on the other hand it helps him to gradually experience these values by engaging his will in the practice.

Thus the maturing of the subject demands the development, in a harmonious unity, of the person's faculties and of the dimensions of the faith: faith welcomed, celebrated, lived, studied, shared and proclaimed.

All this will lead him to live an incarnate and unifying spirituality that will facilitate his encounter with God in the spiritual life, in the project of human construction and in his daily realities (Cf. IMRBC 19).

1.6.3. Progression and articulation

“Religious formation fosters growth in the life of consecration to the Lord from the earliest stages, when a person first becomes seriously interested in undertaking it, to its final consummation” (EE 44). For this it takes into account the gradual and progressive sense of human growth.

God himself, as he reveals himself in the Bible, uses a pedagogy adapted to the stages of human growth. Formation is inspired by this way of God's dealing with his people and of the formative method of Jesus with his disciples.

Attention must be paid to the different stages of growth of the person and to rhythm peculiar to each one. This demands that one distinguish between the ideal to which one aspires and the concrete steps which must be taken and “the accompanying of the life itself in its personal evolution in each member in community” (EE 44).

The spacing of this process demands that it be articulated in a balanced programme. The formation programmes must foresee the planning for each of these stages, the passage from one to the next, and periodic evaluation of the whole process.

Those responsible for formation, while remaining faithful to established plans, are attentive to the difficulties which may arise in their carrying out, and which require an attitude of openness. They take

into consideration the fact that human growth is not uniform, but that it happens through crises and difficulties not always foreseeable, and which demand a flexible and adaptable pedagogy.

Therefore “a right balance must be found between the formation of the group and that of each person, between the respect for the time envisioned for each phase of formation and its adaptation to the rhythm of each individual” (PI 29).

“The formation cycle is followed integrally by the subjects as much in the various stages as in the length of time and the condition of each one” (C 167).

1.6.4. Collaboration and coordination

The formation project takes account of the importance of the collaboration of all in the common task. Precisely because formation is personal it is also communal, because the person cannot become mature without opening himself to others. For this to happen there must be the harmonious involvement of all engaged in the formative activity.

The work of formation takes place in a community that is a witness of consecrated life and that identifies itself with the task of formation.

Those in formation, the formators and their teams, Superiors and their councils, the various commissions linked to formation, communities, all collaborate in a coordinated way in this work.

Those who are responsible for a particular stage of formation behave in such a way that they “form a very closely knit community both in spirit and in activity with those whom they are forming” (OT 5).

The progressive character of formation also demands coordination when programmes of the various stages are developed “to assure continuity in formation by harmonising objectives and methods” (C 163).

1.6.5. Trust and responsibility

“It is the individual religious who holds the first responsibility for saying ‘yes’ to the call which has been received and for accepting all the consequences of this response” (PI 29).

He must be helped to reply with mature freedom to the call of God and to take personal responsibility for the development of his vocation. This responsibility is indispensable, since it is impossible to make progress in

maturing without assuming one's own project of formation and without taking personal responsibility for it.

This principle implies that one must have confidence in the subject and requires that he in his turn respond positively to the confidence placed in him. To the extent that the person responds in an adult manner to the confidence placed in him, the concrete responsibilities confided to him will increase, and he will participate "more actively in his own formation" (C 163).

Commitments to community and apostolic service are a necessary path towards this maturity and growth in personal responsibility. They are programmed according to the stage in which the subject finds himself and the personal and social circumstances.

If it is accepted by each subject as "a matter of personal responsibility by each religious, formation becomes not only an individual personal growth but also a blessing to the community and a source of fruitful energy for the apostolate" (EE 46).

2. FOSTERING VOCATIONS

2.1. VOCATION

A vocation is God's call to the person to show him his love and communicate to him his plan for that person's life.

At the same time, it is a gift from the Spirit who lives in him to know the real mission to which the person is called.

2.1.1. Vocation to life

Every human being is called, in the first place, to life. This is offered him as a free gift from the love of God and, at the same time, as a call to grow and to develop all his human qualities according to God's plan.

Every life has a purpose that involves a dynamic project. Man perceives himself as a being called to carry out a project and to be the architect of his own destiny.

2.1.2. The vocation of the people of God

Israel is the people loved by God and chosen to collaborate in his plan of salvation. The Old Testament reveals to us the characteristics of the vocation of the Chosen People and its historical response to this vocation.

God's constant fidelity shines through them, he continues to love his People and calls them, in the midst of their difficulties, to renew the Covenant of love established with him.

In the history of Israel we encounter, admirably related, the history of the vocations of particular men and women called by God to the disinterested service of his People. They receive a mission which surpasses their personal potential, but which is carried out thanks to the power of God's gift.

2.1.3. The Christian vocation

"The Christian vocation to sanctity evokes the mystery of God who calls, and of the free man who welcomes it and commits himself" (C 147). Every Christian, through baptism, responds to this call and commits himself to developing the seed of life in Christ, sown in him by the Spirit.

"By baptism, Jesus shares his life with each Christian. Each is sanctified in the Son. Each is called to holiness. Each is sent to share the

mission of Christ and is given the capacity to grow in the love and service of the Lord” (EE 6).

This vocation is a gift for the Church, by which the baptised believes in his life of faith, of hope, of charity, and commits himself to the mission of witnessing to the Gospel among men.

Mary, with her unconditional Yes to God’s plan for her life, appears in the Gospel as the paradigm of every Christian vocation: “Let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).

2.1.4. The vocation to the consecrated life

In the universal vocation of the Christian life, the Father calls certain ones to share the same way of life personally practised by Jesus and to make it present in the Church of today (Cf. LG 44; VC 31) This call, which corresponds to a particular gift of the Holy Spirit, intends to offer the whole of life and “constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply rooted in that of baptism and expresses it more fully” (PC 5).

This particular vocation which is lived in the Church in communion with every other vocation, finds its evangelical roots in the call of Jesus to his disciples to leave everything for him and to share more intimately in his mission.

At the origin of the religious consecration there is “a call of God for which there is no explanation apart from the love which he bears for the person whom he calls. This love is absolutely gratuitous, personal, and unique” (PI 8). Those who receive the call give Christ in their turn “a love which is given entirely and without reserve” (PI 9).

2.1.5. The vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family

Throughout history the Holy Spirit has raised many forms of consecrated life which express, in different ways, the inexhaustible riches of the life of Christ and the gifts of the Spirit. Each one tries to reproduce more clearly the certain aspects of the life and mission of Jesus, being a gift which “received from God and approved by the Church, has become a charism for the whole community” (RD 15).

Among the forms of consecrated life there are those of religious Brothers, called to be brothers of Christ, brothers to each other and brothers to all men, so that there may be greater fraternity in the Church. This lay consecration is a state of profession of the evangelical counsels complete

in itself with its proper value for the person and the Church (Cf. VC 60).

“The vocation of the Brother is not only intended to be that of a recipient of God’s love, but also of being a witness and mediator of that same gift” (IMRBC 13).

The Brother of the Holy Family feels himself called to live the Gospel contemplated in the light of Nazareth. Our charism encourages us to realise in our communities the model of life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in family. Our spirituality and the family spirit which is characteristic of our Institute are inspired by them.

The Brother lives his particular vocation by following in the footsteps of Brother Gabriel who participated in the mission of Christ by serving the Church as a religious Brother, especially by catechesis, education and liturgical animation.

2.2. MEANING OF VOCATION PASTORAL MINISTRY

Vocation work is the action by which the ecclesial community “in intimate connection with the entire salvific action of the Church” (DVPM 44) helps people to discover their own vocation and to reply with generosity to God’s call.

The mission of raising, welcoming and accompanying vocations is part of the evangelising work of the Church. This mission then, requires “the active collaboration of pastors, religious, families and teachers, as required in something which forms an integral part of the overall pastoral plan of every particular Church” (VC 64).

Consequently the Institute regards vocational pastoral ministry as an ecclesial service. It develops and implements its own plans and concrete action, in harmony with the guidelines of each diocese and other ecclesial bodies and in collaboration with those responsible for them.

It takes into account that “all pastoral action of the Church is oriented, by its very nature, to vocational discernment. [...] Vocational service must be seen as the soul of all evangelization and of all the Church’s pastoral ministry” (Pope Francis, *Message to the participants of the International Congress on Pastoral Work for Vocations: “Vocational Ministry and Consecrated Life”*, 25 November 2017).

The youth ministry of the Sa-Fa Family will have this “vocational” orientation. It will develop a vocational culture in all educational

and pastoral action that will help young people to approach life and relationships in a key of service.

The Brothers pay particular attention to vocations of special consecration and particularly to vocations to our Institute. In this way they do their best to ensure that the Church will continue to be enriched by the charism of Brother Gabriel as was expressed often in his circulars: “You must all be concerned, dear Brothers, to increase our community with good candidates and we invite you all to do this with all the zeal of our soul, since the harvest is more and more abundant” (Circ 17).

2.3. OBJECTIVES OF VOCATION PASTORAL MINISTRY

Through the vocational pastoral ministry the Institute proposes to:

- Provoke interest for vocations in the Brothers and the communities. Reach the point where all feel responsible for the vocational pastoral ministry and work together according to their possibilities and within their apostolic engagements.
- Ensure that the apostolic activities of the Brothers, especially pastoral activity with youth, strengthen their vocational awareness, so that the young are open to a well-developed project of seeking and discerning the call of God.
- Be a transmitter of God’s call to build his Kingdom from the different vocations that exist in the Church, as ways of following Christ and of ecclesial service, in particular those of the Sa-Fa Family.
- Make consecrated life known so that it will be seen as “something that gives true meaning to life, and to cherish consecration as a true, beautiful and good reality which gives truth, beauty and goodness to one’s own existence” (FLC 37).
- Offer a gradual introduction to the vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family throughout the educational and catechetical process, inviting them to follow it.
- Accompany, with devotion and using the necessary means, the path of seeking and discerning one’s vocation, especially among the young.
- Welcome and accompany those whom God calls to share our life as Brothers of the Holy Family. In this way to renew and extend one’s presence in the service of the Church and of society.

2.4. MEANS

2.4.1. Prayer

Following the invitation of the Lord to ask “the Master of the harvest to send workers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38), the Brothers give first choice to prayer for vocations and live their prayer as a constant invitation to live life as calling.

“They make efforts to accompany thanksgiving by prayer and penance, so as to obtain workers who will assure the fidelity of the Institute to its mission in the Church” (C 151).

Particular forms of this prayer are to:

- frequently ask for vocations during Lauds and Vespers, during daily Eucharist;
- have moments specifically planned to ask for vocations in personal and community prayer: Eucharistic adoration and other community events;
- organise times of prayer for vocations in the context of apostolic activities such as prayer days, vocation campaigns, meetings;
- invite youth who are following a vocation awareness programme and various Christian communities to pray privately and in groups.

2.4.2. Penance

Penance is an expression of the attitude of on-going conversion which is part of our vocation. It is a means of overcoming egoism and growing in adult love.

Young people in search of a vocation are helped to advance along the path of Christian penance, in its dimensions of self-knowledge and availability, of asceticism and personal growth, of service to the community and commitment to those in need.

In their planning of their personal and communal penance, the Brothers will not forget to have an intention for vocations. They are aware that it will help them to move towards conversion in a more authentic religious life, which becomes a vocational witness to the young with whom they work.

2.4.3. Personal and community testimony

“The pastoral ministry of vocations will be inefficacious if it is not sustained by prayer, and if it is not accompanied by the witness of life” (DVPM 99). The Brothers take into account that “the personal example of their humble, joyful life of work dedicated to the service of the Kingdom is an excellent means of calling forth vocations” (C 149).

So that this witness will be fully visible and efficacious, it must:

- with simplicity show the young the joy of a consecrated life which welcomes warmly and offers a disinterested service according to our mission;
- make visible, with imagination and creativity, the presence of the community in the apostolic works; live among them the fraternity which is a characteristic of our charism;
- invite the young who are seeking their vocation to share certain moments of our community life lived in joy and the family spirit;
- dedicate sufficient time to being with the young accompanying them in dialogue, in apostolic activities and in prayer, being a close and transparent witness of our religious life;
- indicate in the Project of Life of the Community the concrete commitments of vocational witness of the community;
- participate in the meetings and celebrations of the Sa-Fa Family.

2.4.4. Vocational plans and programs

Each Province elaborates and keeps up to date a *Formation Plan* through which it applies the *Formation Guide* of the Institute to its own situation. The concrete indications of the vocational pastoral ministry developed in the Province are contained in this plan.

The General and Provincial Chapters, each according to their competence, plan common actions in the area of vocation animation for the Institute or the Province (Cf. C 216 f).

In each Province, the Brother Provincial and his council draw up plans for vocation pastoral ministry. The provincial commission for Formation and Vocations collaborate with them in this work.

In its turn each community includes in its project of life a plan of action to arouse, accompany and welcome vocations in the place of its mission.

Action for vocations is also considered in the pastoral plans of each of the apostolic works of the Brothers.

In a spirit of communion they work and plan, when possible and necessary, with other religious communities, and ecclesial and diocesan authorities.

2.4.5. Catechesis

The Church sees that “it is essential to act, by means of explicit presentation and appropriate catechesis, with a view to encouraging in those called to the consecrated life that free, willing and generous response which carries into effect the grace of vocation” (VC 64).

Vocation catechesis presents the Christian vocation and the specific vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family as a way to discover and accept it in one’s own life.

It is gradually realised over the years of formation and takes into account the different dimensions of the vocation: biblical-theological, ecclesiological, charismatic, missionary.

It favours in young people the spaces for interiorisation, contemplation, silence and prayer.

It is presented in the various places and times where education in faith is carried out:

- in the programmes of religious education;
- in parish and school catechetics;
- in groups of Christian life;
- in the preparation for confirmation, “a time in which there is offered the possibility of a journey of catechesis particularly apt to make them take notice of the call to a service of the Church” (DVPM 86);
- in celebrations of the faith (Sacraments, principal feasts of the liturgical year...);
- in some of the apostolic activities (common Christian meetings, camps...);
- in campaigns, days or feasts more in touch with vocation (annual day of prayer for vocations, seminary day, feast of the Holy Family and the Founder...);
- in apostolic or missionary activities (Mission Sunday, solidarity movements, volunteers...).

2.4.6. The vocational proposal

The invitation of Jesus, “Come and see” (Jn 1:39), is the golden rule of pastoral work for promoting vocations, even today. Following the example of founders and foundresses, this work aims at presenting the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel” (VC 64).

Those who indicate signs of having a vocation in the course of their Christian formation are personally invited to begin the vocational journey.

Within the vocational proposal, and bridging the cultural differences in the different sectors of the Institute, a significant way of proposing vocations is the visit to parishes and educational centers. In these visits there is an explicit invitation to begin a process of discernment or to join a formation house.

The first contact should be followed by a process of approaching and getting to know each other, programmed, with the candidate and the family. It ends with an invitation to enter the formation house.

In the different steps of the proposal, adequate means will be used: visits to the families, audio-visual, social networks, letters, informative leaflets... capable of informing and at the same time inviting the young people to respond in some way to God’s call.

This process requires the involvement of the community of Brothers and of persons prepared to detect and accompany young people who show signs of a consecrated vocation.

2.4.7. Personal accompaniment

Personal accompaniment is that close and active presence which shares the journey of human and Christian growth in the person. Its goal is to help those on this journey to discover the plan of God for their lives and to open themselves to it.

It comes about by following a progressive programme adapted to the circumstances and situations of the one who is being accompanied. This programme foresees a journey of personal maturing which leads to discernment and the option for the vocation. It takes into account the different stages and the corresponding objectives.

The Brothers dedicate time “to listen to the youth, to form them gradually for personal prayer, for listening to the word of God, for active

participation in the Eucharist, for spiritual direction as an efficacious means for discerning the will of God” (DVPM 86).

In the accompaniment of adult vocations, it is necessary to know their personal history and to discern their motivations. In the plan of accompaniment, their particular circumstances must be taken into account. They will be offered periods of probation where clear signs of the authenticity of their intentions can be seen.

Personal accompaniment requires of the being accompanied certain conditions: openness to the action of God, sincerity and honesty, freedom and responsibility in view of the path undertaken, confidence in the person who is doing the accompanying, as well as generosity and availability to the call.

On the part of the accompanier it demands: witness of life and experience of God, an attitude of welcome and respect for the one being accompanied, preparation and the ability to orientate the discernment.

2.4.8. Vocation groups

Vocation groups are an important means in apostolic groups where there are sufficient numbers of young people who are in vocation accompaniment. They offer them “the possibility of living their faith in depth, and permit them at the same time to discover that they are not the only ones to ask themselves questions on the Christian meaning of life and on their vocation” (DVPM 86).

Those who show signs of having a vocation are invited to become part of these groups and to follow a communal process of Christian maturing which leads to the vocation option.

Without abandoning the wider situation of the youth ministry, these groups are accompanied according to a specific programme which comprises all the elements necessary to help communally in the vocation journey.

2.4.9. The Project of Life

Those who engage in this journey develop, in collaboration with the one who accompanies them, a personal project of life which helps them to advance along the chosen path. This means of growth is reviewed and put into practice periodically.

When this process takes place within a group, the group develops its own Project.

2.4.10. Other activities

The various plans and programmes of vocation awareness include other means such as:

- days of get-together and common life,
- camps of initiation and deepening,
- reflective events on vocation,
- experiences of encountering certain communities and their mission,
- song festival with vocation themes,
- putting together things which make vocations known,
- periods of volunteering in places or situations of need,
- participation in pastoral “missions”, Easter celebrations or other experiences...

2.5. ENVIRONMENT OF VOCATIONAL PASTORAL MINISTRY

2.5.1. In educational centres

Christian educational centres, through “education in faith and human formation” (C 124), lead the young to meet Christ so that they may “come to the fullness of man and live as apostles committed to the edification of the world according to the perspectives of the Gospel” (C 124).

Christian education includes among its objectives creating vocational culture and the preparation of the young which enables them discover God’s call in their life and open themselves to this call in freedom and maturity, in conformity with the Gospel values they gradually assume.

Consequently, the pastoral ministry of vocations is integrated into the daily development of the general pastoral ministry of the educational centres of the Sa-Fa Family.

Each scholastic course makes the vocation action plan which it will undertake throughout the year. This plan includes objectives, means, those responsible and periods of evaluation.

The pastoral ministry of vocations includes Brothers, Nazarene Fraternities, teachers, catechists, students and families.

2.5.2. In parishes and Christian communities

Vocational activity is carried out also in the parishes and Christian communities where the Brothers exercise their apostolate. In these places, the work of the Brother who places the charism of the Institute at the service of the community, and the witness of his personal life, are important means of cultivating vocations.

It takes place in collaboration with other pastoral agents, bearing in mind “the integral process that leads to discover the general Christian vocation and in the limits of this, the specific vocation” (DVPM 59).

2.5.3. In youth pastoral ministry

The pastoral ministry to youth, developed within educational works, parishes, and in other church situations, always has a clear vocational orientation.

Its ultimate end is to accompany the young in their journey of growth according to the values of the Gospel and in their gradual insertion in to the church community and the personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. It is oriented toward the formation of adult Christians capable of “discovering the design of God for them” (C 126) and to engage themselves, freely and in a responsible manner, with the Church and society.

The pastoral ministry of youth expresses itself thanks to a gradual and progressive process, adapted to the stages of the human and Christian growth of the young. Each of these stages of growth requires a vocational activity planned accordingly “with the active participation of young people” (ChV 202 & EG 106).

This youth ministry is called to be kerygmatic, because it is oriented “to deepen the personal experience of God’s love” (ChV 214); it is called to be synodal, directed “towards a participatory and co-responsible Church” (ChV 206) and called to be missionary because “the whole community evangelizes and educates them” (EG 106).

With those young persons disposed towards being accompanied more closely in their journey, a specific pastoral activity is proposed. This is complementary to the general youth ministry and needs a suitable programme. “The Brothers orient and encourage particularly those who show the disposition for the priesthood and the religious life” (C 126).

2.5.4. In the family

The family is the natural environment in which vocations are born and develop normally. There, Christian values which ripen into a vocational option of service to others must be gradually nurtured.

Moreover, family support is important in the vocation process of the individual, especially at the moment of making decisions which concern life. The pastoral ministry of vocations, therefore, gives the family the importance it merits and includes it in its plans, while paying attention to the many difficulties lived in the home.

Families are invited to reflect and to pray for vocations and to create in the home a climate which is favourable to them. At the same time they are helped to accompany and support those of its members who are beginning to think about seeking their vocation.

It is proposed to the families the model of Jesus, Mary and Joseph who live to seek and to accept the will of God in their lives. The different aspects of the life of the Holy Family will be a source of inspiration for those Christian families who will learn also how to create a climate where a vocation may be born and develop.

If it is true that Jesus presents himself as a model of obedience to his earthly parents, submitting to them (cf. Lk 2:51), it is also true that he shows that the son's choice of life and his very Christian vocation may require a separation in order to fulfil his own dedication to the Kingdom of God (cf. Mt 10:34-37; Lk 9:59-62).

2.5.5. In other fields of action

The Brothers also work in vocational pastoral ministry in other areas besides their usual sphere of apostolic endeavour.

They make the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family known in colleges, parishes, youth movements, missionary and volunteer groups, chaplaincies in universities, vocation campaigns, by means of social communication etc.

2.5.6. In the formation houses

The formation houses are a privileged means of cultivating vocations. The environment and the closeness to the Brothers allow the young people to follow a sequential and integral process of formation.

The formation houses encourage vocational animation through a plan of action. The candidates in these houses are invited to be vocation animators in their own environments.

2.6. VOCATIONAL ITINERARY

The help that the Institute gives to those who finds themselves searching for their vocation in life is adapted to the process.

2.6.1. Initiation stage

a) Characteristics

This stage presupposes an earlier journey in which an openness to the life of faith and to the person and message of Christ has been made, and a basic knowledge of the Christian faith has been acquired.

At this point one meets those who feel, in a certain way, attracted by the person of Christ and have decided to embark on a journey which is more committed to the Gospel. They live the idea of following Jesus radically with greater enthusiasm, dedicating themselves to it with much energy.

Although the call is not yet clearly defined, they experience the gap between their present state and what they feel called to be. Their interior disposition is open to a project of life centred on Jesus and the proclamation of his Gospel.

The biblical model of this stage is that of Jeremiah, “seduced” by the Lord (Jer 20:70) or of St Paul captured by the radical eruption of Christ into his life.

In this stage certain difficulties often appear such as the lack of depth in the initial attitudes of their first enthusiasm, instability in decisions taken or lack of motives in the initial generosity. For that “after the enthusiasm of the first meeting with Christ, there comes the constant struggle of everyday life, a struggle which turns a vocation into a tale of friendship with the Lord” (VC 64).

The goal of this stage is to arrive at the vital question of one’s own vocation understood as a call from God to consecrate one’s whole life to following Christ by serving the Church and the neediest.

b) Actions to help:

- offer personal accompaniment which helps to consolidate the path taken;

- put in place a formation programme directed towards the integration of personal values, to growth in affective maturity and in freedom;
- facilitate openness to God by listening, praying the Word and the Sacraments;
- encourage an attitude of acceptance of the will of God and readiness to take up daily duties;
- present life as a vocation and universal call to holiness;
- give information about the various specific vocations in the Church, though globally still;
- study vocation as expressed in the Bible, particularly that of Jesus open to the will of the Father;
- favour integration into groups for growing in faith;
- offer apostolic experiences of openness to the needs of others;
- make the proposal to initiate a vocational search itinerary.

2.6.2. Searching and deepening stage

a) Characteristics

The starting point for this stage is clearly defined human and Christian maturity. The individual understands his life as a plan of following Christ and devotedness to others in the Church.

Christ gradually becomes the absolute and unifying value of the person who goes forward in an attitude of readiness before the will of God, asking the Lord: “What must I do?” (Lk 18:18).

During this period the person grows in openness to the needs of the world and the Church, in an attitude of listening to the calls which speak from them to his life. Experiences of Church, of apostolic service to the needy and greater commitment to others are lived in community or in groups.

This is the moment of the deepest awareness of the different vocations in the Church community and of meeting with the person of Brother Gabriel and his charism.

The fundamental biblical reference of this stage is the person of Jesus, vowed to the service of the Kingdom and calling his disciples to follow him, taking part in his mission: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mk 1:17).

The arrival at this point is the beginning of a period of discernment and decision about his own vocation.

b) Actions to help:

- organise accompaniment of vocations which makes it possible to recognise God's action in one's own history and to open oneself generously to the gift of vocation;
- facilitate a meeting with Jesus which will encourage following him radically;
- put together a plan of life which gives prominence to growth in prayer, in insertion into the community and apostolic commitment;
- facilitate belonging to a group or a community where one can share the experience of the vocation journey;
- offer occasions for getting to know the social and Church reality and for engaging with this reality;
- make possible a sufficient study of the different vocations specific to the Church, among them that of Brother of the Holy Family;
- invite the individual to get to know Brother Gabriel and his charism in the service of the Church;
- help overcome the difficulties which arise during this period such as the fear of going deeper and seeing clearly, the search for reasons for putting off making a decision or for not making any, the tendency to substitute compromising activities for the real option, etc.

2.6.3. Discernment and decision stage

a) Characteristics

This stage also includes various phases.

Clarification and objectification phase

During this phase one looks for the necessary facts and the method of discernment. Attention must be paid to three types of information.

- Those belonging to the human dimension: family conditions and environment, growth in affectivity, formation of the personality, etc.

- Those pertaining to the life of Christian faith: the story of his own faith life, internalising of its content, etc.

- Those belonging to his vocation: origin of the call, motivations, process of maturing, etc.

This is the moment to discover in the events and personal experiences signs of the presence and call of God. One tries to read the individual's story by giving him a unifying and harmonious sense concerning his vocation.

Discernment phase

Now the person enters a state of prayer which places him in the hands of God, abandoning himself unconditionally to his plans.

He tries to understand deeply his own motives with the aim of purifying them and to make an option for the path to which he feels called.

Decision phase

Rather than choosing, it is to know oneself chosen, by God. It is to accept having been called to the radical following of Christ and to reply: "Here I am, send me" (Is 6:8).

The signs of a right choice are peace, interior joy and becoming open to a responsible and committed life with God and others.

Once the decision taken, the person must enter a unified and harmonious way of life.

b) Actions to help:

- provide a method of discernment;
- put in place closer accompaniment, guiding the candidate through the various phases of discernment;
- facilitate sharing in the group during this stage;
- make the different vocations in the Church more clearly known through study, reading and reflection;
- create possibilities for closer contact with communities and apostolic works;
- organise communal meetings and spiritual retreats about discernment.

2.7. WELCOMING VOCATIONS

2.7.1. Meaning

Welcoming vocations is the way in which the Institute goes about accepting candidates who give indications of having a vocation, to accompany them and help them on their vocation journey.

At the different junctures of this welcome the candidate is offered a suitable plan of formation and the presence of formators who will accompany him in this process.

2.7.2. Forms of welcome

Each Province and Delegation organizes the concrete arrangements for the welcome of vocations.

a) The Aspirancy

This is an institution destined to help those who show signs of the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family to grow in their awareness of the call and the response to this same call.

To be admitted to the Aspirancy the candidate must present certain conditions:

- indications of a vocation shown in attitudes and behaviour;
- readiness to enter the search for a vocation and an attitude of initial openness to the vocation of Brother;
- human qualities suitable to our religious life.

The Aspirancy offers a plan of formation aimed at achieving the objectives of the vocation journey followed in this milieu.

It is open to the candidates, families, parishes, ecclesial communities, social milieu, etc. It collaborates with various groups or ecclesial institutions in the common work of formation.

b) Other forms of welcome

The Institute offers other structures for welcoming vocations adapted to social, religious and personal circumstances. Notably, there are:

- Communities of Brothers who welcome some candidates for a period of time to experience community life and to deepen their vocation; this experience must be programmed and accompanied by a Brother formator.
- Vocation groups in which one may follow a process of maturing of the vocation which is in preparation for discernment.
- Personal accompaniment of candidates who, while living in their families, follow a vocation programme.

2.7.3. Aspects of formation

In the various forms of welcome candidates are offered an integrated plan of formation adapted to the stages of personal growth. It includes the following aspects of formation.

- human formation: intellectual, affective, social...
- christian formation: growth in faith, life of prayer and Sacraments, openness to community, apostolic engagement...
- vocational formation: personal accompaniment, knowledge of vocation, discernment...
- charismatic formation: openness to the charism of the Institute, sense of the Brother's vocation...

At the time deemed most appropriate, the Institute ensures the candidate's health and psychological suitability by means of tests carried out by professionals.

2.8. THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VOCATION PASTORAL MINISTRY

2.8.1. The Provincial and his Council

They are the first and foremost responsible for the pastoral ministry of vocations in the Province. Among their duties are:

- to keep alive the spirit of prayer and active involvement in the pastoral vocation ministry all the Brothers and communities;
- to name or confirm those immediately concerned in the pastoral vocation ministry, giving them time and sufficient means, and supporting them in their work;
- to name the Provincial Commission of Vocations and Formation;
- to see to it that the Provincial Plan for the Pastoral Ministry of Vocations is carried out;
- to coordinate the plans of the ministry to youth and the pastoral ministry of vocations;
- to know and follow the guidelines of the Episcopal Conference, the Conference of Major Superiors and the General Council in this matter.

2.8.2. Those directly responsible for the vocation pastoral ministry

Their work does not replace the responsibility of all the Brothers and communities who must remember that “animation of vocations is the work of all” (C 152), but they try to stimulate this.

Among the most important aspects of their mission are:

- to animate and guide the vocation activities of the Provinces and communities;
- to draw up an annual plan inserted in the pastoral vocation programme of the Province;
- to take responsibility for its implantation by working with team spirit and collaboration;
- to collaborate with the youth ministry in the works of the Institute, of the parishes, of the apostolic movements;
- to put in place personal accompaniment for those who are following a vocation awareness programme;
- to promote and organise more intense moments in the vocation ministry such as retreats, get-togethers, youth Easter celebrations, days of prayer;
- to prepare and distribute vocation material;
- to collaborate with diocesan organisations and make sure that “ all the pastoral activities for vocation ministry are fully integrated into the overall plan of the Diocese” (DVPM 44).

2.8.3. The Communities and the Brothers

It is a task of first priority for all consecrated persons to “propose with courage, by word and example, the ideal of the following of Christ, and then to support the response to the Spirit’s action in the heart of those who are called” (VC 64).

Each Community, consequently, actively collaborates in the pastoral ministry of vocations in the field of its apostolate.

Some of the means used by the Community are:

- to offer a witness, lived “generously in a family spirit” (C 149), which can be seen as an invitation to share our vocation;
- to include prayer and penance for vocations in the programme throughout the year;

- to introduce vocation activity into the Community plan of life and in the pastoral plan of apostolic work;
- to collaborate with the pastoral plan for vocations in the Diocese where the community works;
- to name a Brother of the Community to be more directly responsible for this work;
- as far as possible, to open the house to youth and offer them a place to meet;
- to collaborate and be present at the provincial activities to which they are invited or which they consider appropriate.

2.8.4. The Communities of Formation Houses

Their mission is fully written in the action of the Province to accompany youth in their vocation journey. The concrete activity of each of these Communities depends on the stage of formation in which the candidates find themselves.

All the members have a special sensitivity to the problem of the vocations and collaborate according to their ability in the mission of the Community. They are aware that “live the Gospel, that pray, that express their happiness, that serve the poor, that are faithful to the charism of their institute” (DVPM 87).

2.8.5. The formators

They are the ones called to collaborate with the divine action that acts in each aspirant.

They are directly responsible for training and form a team under the responsibility of a first formator. They share the responsibilities and carefully implement the Formation Plan.

Among their functions are:

- To carry out their work with dedication and generosity, offering a testimony of balanced living of the human and spiritual values of the vocation.
- To create the conditions that make it possible for the aspirant to achieve the objectives of this stage.
- To guarantee a personal accompaniment that allows him to open himself to a path of formation to the consecrated vocation of a Brother.

- To help the aspirant to know the elements necessary to carry out his vocational discernment and to orient him along the same.
- To establish an open and fraternal relationship with those in formation, based on selfless service and characterized by family spirit.
- To maintain contacts with the family, creating a relationship that helps the aspirant to progress in a balanced way on his path of human and religious growth.

3. THE POSTULANCY

3.1. NATURE AND AIM

The postulancy is the “period of preparation for the novitiate” (C 169). During this time the candidate, after a preliminary period of discernment, prepares to continue his process of personal growth by coming closer to the experience of the life of the Brothers of the Holy Family by preparing to begin his novitiate.

The candidate to religious life must begin the novitiate only when “aware of God’s call, he has reached that degree of human and spiritual maturity which will allow him to decide to respond to this call with sufficient and proper responsibility and freedom” (RC 4, 10).

The postulancy is a period of probation which “has as its purpose not merely to formulate a tentative judgment on the aptitudes and vocation of the candidate, but also to verify the extent of his knowledge of religious subjects and, where need be, to complete it in the degree judged necessary and, lastly, to permit a gradual transition from lay life to the life proper to the novitiate” (RC 11).

3.2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The general objectives of this stage are:

3.2.1. Carrying out vocational discernment

During this time the postulant must undertake a very serious discernment to know with greater certitude if he is called by God to be a Brother of the Holy Family. In this process of discernment the Institute, through the intermediary of the formators, “is assured of the aptitude of the postulant” (C 168) and “helps him to discover his motives” (C 168) to verify whether his plan is authentic.

In discernment the aptitudes of the postulant are taken into account, as also his motives and personal maturity, so as to judge whether he is ready to gradually assume the FSF life and begin the novitiate.

3.2.2. Making progress in personal maturity

The formation specific to this period is intended to help the postulant open himself to the divine call by attaining “human and spiritual maturity

which will allow him to decide to respond to this call with sufficient and proper responsibility and freedom” (RC 4).

Towards this end the Institute provides him with the necessary means to carry out his “Christian, human and professional formation” (C 168), taking its inspiration from the practice of the Founder who was concerned that the postulants be “formed in knowledge and virtue” (Circ 17).

3.2.3. Making an experience of community life

The object of the postulancy is to introduce the postulant gradually to a style of community life which prepares him for the experience of religious life which will be found in the novitiate.

Through this experience the postulant will have “the opportunity to test the authenticity of his choice” (C 168).

3.2.4. Preparing for the Novitiate

The formation programme of this stage is intended to prepare the candidate to make a “truly profitable novitiate” (C 168).

“Great importance must be attached to this preparation for the novitiate” (RC 4), since most of the difficulties encountered today in the formation of novices stem from the fact that they do not possess “they did not have the required maturity” (RC 4).

3.3. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

To be admitted to the postulancy the candidate must possess certain qualities.

3.3.1. In his human maturity:

- a degree of liberty and responsibility which will allow him to personally take on the demands of formation;
- sufficient knowledge and acceptance of self and the ability to acquire the human virtues necessary for the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family;
- the ability to become integrated into community life and to grow in his relations with others.

3.3.2. In his Christian maturity:

- a life of faith manifested in personal and community prayer, in the appreciation of the sacraments and in the daily search for the will of God;
- openness to a relationship with others based on love and skills for community life;
- dispositions to give oneself to others in the apostolate.

3.3.3. In his aptitude for the life of Brother:

- experience of growth in his vocational journey and signs of a vocation;
- open personal attitude to a state of consecrated life;
- disposition to live the spirituality of the Institute and to grow in the family spirit;
- inclination towards the apostolate proper to the Brothers of the Holy Family.

3.4. AREAS OF FORMATION

3.4.1. Human formation

a) Specific objectives:

- develop the faculties and values of the personality: corporality, intelligence, will-power, sociability;
- deepen understanding, acceptance and respect as well as one's own personal and family history;
- grow in the affective life and in sexual balance by replacing the ability to love and to be loved by developing the meaning of disinterestedness, and by being open to others in an attitude of service;
- develop a critical attitude to self, to others and to reality with freedom and responsibility;
- develop the freedom which allows the individual to open himself to an ideal of life and to develop a personal Project which allows him to go towards his goal.

b) Means:

- Corporal education:

- practise physical education and sport;
- personal hygiene;
- contact with nature;
- mastery of self;
- manual work and artistic pursuits.

- Intellectual education and openness to culture:

- knowledge of the chief aspects of human maturity;
- discovery and acceptance of one's own personal reality, with one's qualities and limitations;
- analysis of one's own cultural reality and openness to other cultures and ways of thinking;
- acquisition of a sufficient academic formation and a method of study, reading and enquiry;
- exercise of reflection and interiorising of values;
- critical and responsible use of the means of communication.

- Education of the will:

- correct use of freedom and the capacity to make decisions, coherence of behaviour, acceptance of responsibilities;
- mastery of natural impulses and strengthening of the will through being open to values and the practise of personal asceticism;
- development of the ability to overcome difficulties and conflict situations;
- practise of sincerity and honesty;
- responsible organisation of work, study and free time;
- reflect on the meaning and purpose of behaviours.

- Education of affectivity and sociability:

- cordial openness towards nature, self and others;
- positive integration of one's own sexuality and valuing marriage and consecrated celibacy;

- development of social virtues such as politeness, respect, communication, dialogue and friendship;
- education in sensitivity when faced with injustice or need;
- realisation of the need for separation from family and the milieu;
- respect for the values of one's culture, one's people and its citizens.

3.4.2. Christian formation

a) Specific objectives:

- deepen knowledge and experience of the Christian faith, opening one's life to the paschal mystery;
- discover Jesus as the centre of one's personal existence, being open to a personal relation with him which gives the ability to listen to his call;
- live the experience of prayer, of the Sacraments, of listening to the Word and to personal openness to the action of the Spirit;
- grow in the practise of Christian virtues, especially those which have to do with one's vocation;
- grow in love of giving which is expressed in a readiness for service and solidarity with the neediest.

b) Means:

- **Relationship with God:**
 - reading and assimilation of the Word of God, confronting one's own life with it;
 - frequent and active participation in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation;
 - contemplation of God in nature, in the brother, in events and in one's life;
 - frequent encounters with the Lord in pra;
 - shared prayer in community, especially in the liturgy.
- **Knowledge of the Christian faith:**
 - all-encompassing and progressive catechesis in the elements of faith;

- knowledge of Jesus Christ from biblical, liturgical and sacramental perspectives;
 - basic presentation of the Church and Christian spirituality, of vocation and the universal call to holiness;
 - ideas about prayer, its form and methods;
 - formative reading especially about the person of Jesus, vocation and the life of those who witness to life.
- **Practice of Christian virtues:**
- growth in the life of faith, hope and charity, as the fruit of the experience of daily encounter with Christ and openness to the action of the Spirit;
 - openness to the ecclesial community and to others, cultivating those virtues which help growth in love and which build fraternity;
 - education in sensitivity to the needs of the Church and of men, by concrete actions of assistance according to one's possibilities.

3.4.3. Formation for consecrated life

a) Specific objectives:

- deepen the meaning of the Christian vocation and the vocation to religious life;
- grow in an attitude of availability to God's call and make progress in the practice of discernment;
- acquire a broad understanding of the meaning of religious life and its mission in the Church;
- live an experience of community life that helps to mature in generous openness to others.

b) Means:

- **Vocational maturity:**
 - study the Christian vocation and the religious vocation in its various dimensions;
 - knowledge and practise of discernment of vocation;
 - openness to the will of God in the concrete circumstances of life;

- frequent meetings for personal accompaniment;
 - personal project, drawn up and reviewed with the help of the formator;
 - spiritual retreat and days of reflection throughout the year;
 - meetings with other groups of young people in formation.
- **Knowledge of consecrated life**
- introduction to the study of religious life: consecration, evangelical counsels, community and mission;
 - practice of the virtues which will help later on to live the vows and the distancing of other realities;
 - active integration into community life through service and acceptance of responsibilities;
 - meetings with other religious communities and participation in some of their activities.
- **Integration into community life:**
- discovering and experiencing the basics of community life: shared faith and openness to fraternal love;
 - overcoming egoism and individualism, progressive freeing from emotional dependency and openness to others in a spirit of giving and welcome;
 - concrete acts which express personal growth in love: concern for others, respect, forgiveness, solidarity...
 - taking on community responsibilities and developing initiatives of service;
 - formative reunions, planning of community life and its periodic review.

3.4.4. Formation in the charism of the Institute

a) Objectives:

- to feel oneself attracted by the vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family and come to recognise it as one's own ideal of life;
- to open oneself to the contemplation of the mystery of Nazareth and discover the Holy Family as model for identification;
- to enter into contact with the person of Brother Gabriel with admiration and recognise his charism as one's own;

- to insert oneself into the spirituality of the Institute and the family spirit;
- to know the reality and the mission of the Institute feeling the call to belong as a member of the family;
- to prepare oneself joyfully and decisively to enter the novitiate.

b) Means:

- experience the Holy Family through prayer, meditation, reading and celebration of its feasts;
- knowledge of Nazareth spirituality and the practise in personal and community life of the example of Jesus , Mary and Joseph;
- knowledge of the person of Brother Gabriel, especially through readings about his life and work;
- information of the Institute, its identity and mission;
- experiences of encounter with certain communities of Brothers and with their apostolic activities;
- practise of virtues which develop the family spirit: humility, simplicity, obedience, union and devotedness;
- experience of activities in keeping with the mission of the Institute.

3.4.5. Program of studies of the Postulancy

The subjects of this stage are:

- a) Theoretical knowledge of the main human virtues.
- a) Study of the Christian mystery:
 - Introduction to the Bible: O.T.
 - General Moral.
 - Sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation.
 - Introduction to Liturgy.
 - Fundamental Theology.
 - Philosophy (*introduction*).
 - The Catechism of the Catholic Church (*as a doctrinal summary*).
- a) Study of Consecrated Life and the Institute:
 - Vocation and vocational discernment.

- Life of the Founder (*Brother Frederic*).
- Brother Gabriel's autobiographical writings (*Selection of texts*).
- Iconography and symbols of the Institute.
- Information about the life of the Institute (*publications*).

The formators adapt this program, in agreement with the Brother Provincial, also taking into account the possibility of carrying out some studies outside the Formation House (Inter-Postulancy or others). In places where a two-year cycle of postulancy and novitiate is carried out, these subjects are adapted.

3.5. CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS STAGE

3.5.1. Place and modalities

“In order to adapt the time of the postulancy to the demands of a better preparation for the novitiate, the Provincial and his Council will determine the place and the duration of the Postulancy” (GD 15).

This stage of formation may be organised in various modes of which some are:

- in a house expressly designated for this end, under the direction of a team of formators;
- in the aspirancy or a house of welcome for vocations, for the last stage, with sufficient autonomy;
- in a community of the Province, even without sharing all of its life, and at least under the responsibility of a formator;
- outside a house of the Province, following a specific programme of formation and with sufficient contact with certain communities and with those responsible for formation.

3.5.2. Duration

As for the duration of the postulancy, one must take into account what is determined by the Provincial Directory and the concrete circumstances of each postulant and of each group.

The time will be sufficiently long for the aims of this stage of formation to be achieved, but without delaying excessively the time of entry to the novitiate. The criteria of personalising and disinterestedness must not be forgotten, with the goal of obtaining sufficient maturity in each postulant.

3.5.3. The formation programme

The postulancy unfolds according to a formation programme approved by the Provincial and his Council. It applies the *Formation Guide* of the Institute and the Plan of Formation of the Province to the concrete reality of the formation house.

When a postulant is living this stage outside a house of the Province, a specific programme for his formation is applied, which will guarantee the outcomes proposed for the postulancy.

3.6. AGENTS OF FORMATION

In the first chapter we consider the behaviour of the agents of formation in the whole process of formation. Here are added certain specific elements belonging to the period of the postulancy.

3.6.1. The postulant

When a candidate decides to begin the postulancy he takes personal responsibility for his formation with the aim of reaching the goals of this stage. He has the first responsibility in discerning his vocation and his personal growth, which are the principal objectives of the postulancy.

For this he undertakes to:

- make progress in his human and Christian maturity by cultivating the virtues which allow him to open himself to the vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family;
- deepen the action of the Holy Spirit in his life of prayer and the Sacraments, in an attitude of docility;
- open himself with confidence to his formators, allowing himself to be guided, through personal accompaniment, in the process of discernment of his vocation;
- integrate himself responsibly and with initiative into community life, taking part actively in formation meetings and collaborating in the development of the formation programme;
- engage in the process of discernment of his vocation by coming to know himself more deeply, by purifying his motives and accepting the separations which preparation for novitiate demands;

- advance in the way of overcoming self by learning from lived experience, through review of life, and in giving himself goals in keeping with the aims of his personal project;
- identify himself progressively with our charism, allowing the Holy Family and the Founder to occupy a more and more important place in his life.

3.6.2. The Community

The Community in which the postulancy takes place, no matter in which mode, has an important responsibility in formation. It must be an authentic community of faith and life, which offers the postulant the possibility of personal growth as a person and as a Christian, and to advance along the path of his vocation.

All the Brothers of the Community are responsible for this task and coordinate their efforts under the direction of the one who is first responsible for formation. This mission occupies pride of place in the life project of the Community in which are included the means proposed to accomplish it.

In the Community the postulant must find:

- the possibility of nourishing his life of faith and progressing in the domain of prayer and sacramental life;
- a place to experience fraternity and grow in dialogue, communication, service and openness to mission.

3.6.3. The formators

These are the ones called to collaborate with the Holy Spirit who works in each postulant, by directly assuming the responsibility of formation.

They constitute a team which works under the leader.

Among its functions are:

- to create the conditions which allow the postulant to reach the goals of this stage, arriving at the maturity which will allow him to make a vocational option which is free and responsible;
- to help the postulant to know how to discern his vocation and to guide him throughout the process;

- to accompany him in this work of enlightenment and purification of his motives and to discover the vocation as his own ideal for life;
- to offer him the possibility of a life in community in which he can live the family spirit and to know from within the charism of the Institute;
- to be in contact with the master of novices, with those responsible for the pastoral ministry of vocations and with the formators of the Aspirancy so as to assure continuity in the process of formation;
- to maintain contacts with the family, by creating a relationship which helps the postulant to make progress in his own growth, especially at moments of greater separation.

3.7. DISCERNMENT AND ADMISSION TO THE NOVITIATE

When the time for the end of the postulancy approaches, if the candidate has decided to ask for entrance to the novitiate, he presents a written request to the Brother Provincial. In this request he sets out the motives which have led him to take this decision and gives an evaluation of his experience as a postulant.

In their turn, the formators draw up a report of the postulant and present it to the Provincial and his Council, for the purpose of guiding them in the task of admission to the novitiate. It is made taking into account the goals of the stage and in collaboration with the team of formators and the community.

In this report the following points are addressed:

- human, affective and intellectual maturity, making use of attitudinal tests or an expert in psychology;
- authenticity of the vocation project and aptitudes for the life of the Brother of the Holy Family;
- integration into community and capacity for community life;
- practice of the Christian life and vocational maturity;
- all-round evaluation of the postulant's experience.

4. THE NOVITIATE

4.1. NATURE AND AIM

“The Novitiate is the fundamental stage of formation” (C 169), during which the novice is initiated into the religious life of the Brother of the Holy Family.

“The novitiate, by which life in an Institute begins, is ordered to these ends: that the novices come to a better awareness of their divine vocation, particularly the vocation proper to the Institute, that they experience the Institute’s manner of life and form their minds and hearts in its spirit, and that their resolution and suitability are tested” (CIC 646).

Brother Gabriel, speaking about the time of the novitiate, said that “it is used by the novices to examine their vocation, to acquire the virtues of religion, study Christian doctrine, the Rules, the prayers and the practices in use in the Association” (NG XLV).

4.2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The general objectives proposed for this stage are:

4.2.1. Experiencing the life of the Brother of the Holy Family

During this stage the novice has a real experience of religious life which allows him to develop his own personality in keeping with the Gospel and the project of life expressed in our Constitutions.

It is the time for knowing Brother Gabriel in depth and identifying with the charism of the Institute by incarnating his spirituality, impregnating himself with the family spirit and opening himself to his mission.

In this way he will prepare himself efficaciously for religious profession which will take place at the end of the novitiate.

4.2.2. Meeting Christ

The novice begins a personal process of “initiation into a profound and living knowledge of Christ and of his Father” (PI 47), through the action of the Holy Spirit. He lives a radical experience of conversion to the Lord, which he chooses as the central and absolute value of his existence.

He enters the life of prayer by an attitude of welcome to the will of the father and openness to the action of the Spirit which moulds his personality, conforming it more and more to Christ's. He progressively unifies his life with the experience of God to the point of being able to assert, with St Paul, that "For me, living is Christ" (Phil 1:21).

4.2.3. Maturing the vocational response

The novice deepens his generous response to God's love, shown in the gift of a vocation. He advances in vocational maturity which allows him to discover in the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family his own personal path to configuration with Christ.

It is a good time for the novice to abandon himself into the hands of God and to let himself be led into the desert, where God wants to "speak to his heart" (Hos 2:16). There, like Jesus at Nazareth, he can perceive with greater clarity, the voice of God calling him with his love.

4.2.4. Allowing the Institute to know the novice

In its turn the Institute has the opportunity to observe the novice in order to know his motives, his abilities and the progress of his maturing. In this way, it can verify the authenticity of his vocation.

The novitiate becomes a period of testing in which the novice must show clear signs of a true vocation, as well as aptitudes and favourable dispositions for living as a Brother of the Holy Family.

4.3. CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION

To be admitted to the novitiate, the candidate, in addition to the canonical requirements (cfr. CIC 642-645), must possess sufficient human, Christian and 'vocational' maturity.

In the places where the stages of postulancy and novitiate are separated, it is necessary to offer the master of novices a report on the candidate and the areas of formation carried out.

4.3.1. In his human maturity:

- willingness and ability to grow personally, serenely accepting his limitations and developing his abilities in an attitude of seeking and overcoming;

- emotional equilibrium and disposition to give himself freely to others in community life and in the apostolate;
- readiness to accept maturely personal responsibility for his formation journey.

4.3.2. In his Christian maturity:

- real progress on the path to personal openness to faith, at the level of content as well as in experience;
- life of prayer and of the Sacraments, responsible engagement with the community and in apostolic service;
- more personal relationship with Christ and readiness to undertake the road to conversion of heart in following him.

4.3.3. In his vocational maturity:

- deepening and purifying his motives;
- identifying with the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family, recognising it as his ideal way of life;
- gradual opening up to the Holy Family and to Brother Gabriel as living models in his vocation journey;
- readiness and initial aptitude for following the Evangelical counsels, religious fraternity and apostolic mission according to our Constitutions;
- ability to accept positively personal and group accompaniment as a means of growth.

4.4. AREAS OF FORMATION

Since formation is a unified and gradual process, the various aspects analysed in the preceding stage continue to be developed during the novitiate. Omitted is a list of certain formative elements, stressing instead the more specific elements of this new stage.

4.4.1. Human formation

a) Specific objectives:

- continue the process already begun of knowledge, acceptance and balanced integration of all facets of the personality;

- assume, integrate and develop affectivity and sexuality within a framework of maturity in love of giving;
- continue to develop openness to others and cultivate human virtues which contribute to fraternity;
- grow towards a sufficient sense of separation from former life and gradual openness to the values of consecrated life.

b) Means:

- deepen self-knowledge in order to reach esteem and proper acceptance of one's own reality and be able to be open to a project of maturity in following Christ;
- learn about the elements of human maturity, character and transformation, psychological evolution of the person and interpersonal communication;
- study of one's own emotional life and knowledge of personal feelings and emotions, with the aim of overcoming one's fears, prejudices and dependencies, by growing in personal freedom;
- organisation of community life so as to, facilitate the development of responsibility; encourage initiative and creativity, share out services, learn to manage time;
- put in place breaks from the former way of life: critical and moderate use of forms of communication, austerity of life, detachment from superfluities, moderate relations with family and friends;
- critical and moderate use of the media, following the rules of the formation team;
- strengthen the will through experience of values and personal asceticism; in particular initiation into the balanced practice of silence and solitude, personal discipline, work and sacrifice;
- open and integrated relationship with nature, through contemplation, physical exercise and manual work;
- learning foreign languages to enable him to participate in the mission of the Institute;
- artistic and musical education and learning certain skills useful to the community and apostolate such as typing and computers, minor repairs, gardening.

4.4.2. Christian formation

a) Specific objectives:

- grow in conversion to Christ discovered and accepted as the central and unifying value of the spiritual experience, taking decisive steps in following him and allowing oneself to be transformed by the Spirit into a new man in the image of Christ;
- deepen the experience of the Christian faith by living it as a gift from the Father and being open to giving one's life generously to God and the Brothers;
- absorb the biblical, theological and spiritual bases, in theory and practice, of the Christian life, directed to the service "of a loving knowledge of God and a deepening of the life of faith" (RC 29);
- allow the novices to "realize in their lives in progressive stages that cohesive unity whereby contemplation and apostolic activity are closely linked" (RC 5).

b) Means:

- Conversion to Christ:

- prolonged personal meetings with Christ which allow one to open oneself to the contemplation of life, to confronting him and his message in person and in friendly dialogue with Him, allowing oneself to be transformed little by little by his Spirit;
- knowledge of self in the light of this meeting with Jesus, discovering one's own life "hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3) , purifying motives and restructuring the personality in conformity with Him;
- close following of him with the dispositions of the disciple, assimilating his attitudes, letting oneself be interiorly transformed in keeping with spirit of the Beatitudes and deepening each day the paschal mystery which makes one die with Christ in order to be born anew;
- "the practice of human and Christian virtues and the constant effort to place oneself within a perspective which allows one to see all things in the light of the mystery of Christ" (C 170);

- daily spiritual reading which helps one enter the road of “following” and opens one to the action of the Spirit in one’s own life.

- Experience of prayer and Sacraments:

- deepening of personal prayer, done “with humility, confidence, love and perseverance” (NG 367), consecrating sufficient time, with the same attitude of Jesus in his openness to the will of the Father;
- daily meditation on the Word of God, welcoming it into one’s heart, allowing oneself to be challenged and transformed by it and in living it throughout the day as real interior food;
- daily fusing of prayer and action, practising “habitual union with God in availability to the Holy Spirit” (C 170) and growing in unity of life after the example of the personal experience of Christ;
- the exercise of community prayer, especially in the liturgy, understanding its meaning as the prayer of praise of the church, of thanksgiving and of intercession and by participating actively in its preparation and animation;
- participating in daily Eucharist, living it as a loving meeting with the love of God who gives himself to us in Jesus and transforms us into himself, committing us to building communion and the gift of one’s own life to others;
- frequent celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, as the road to humble knowledge of self and the celebration of forgiveness and the action of God in one’s life.

- Study of Christian doctrine:

- introduction to Sacred Scripture as a means of opening oneself to reading and assimilating the Word of God;
- an approach to Christology which helps the novice to experience Christ and his paschal mystery;
- knowledge of the basic elements of ecclesiology as a means of feeling that he belongs to the Church and is open to its life and mission;

- introduction to the study of the liturgy , especially the Sacraments, the liturgy of the hours and the liturgical year, as a way of meeting Christ both personally and in community;
- study of Christian spirituality and the principal schools of spirituality in the history of the Church which allows one to know “the realities of the supernatural life and of the paths leading to a deepening of union with God” (RC 5);
- practical and theoretical knowledge of prayer and meditation, as well as the principal methods.

4.4.3. Formation for consecration life

a) Specific objectives:

- deepen personal openness to the vocation as a generous acceptance of the gift of God and a daily commitment to his will;
- experience the religious life of the Brother of the Holy Family, living all its elements harmoniously as preparation for consecration to the Lord in religious profession;
- live the following of Christ, poor, chaste and obedient through knowledge and practise of the evangelical counsels and awareness of the values of religious consecration;
- experience community life built on the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the Brothers.

b) Means:

- **Vocational maturation and experience of consecrated life:**
 - daily cultivation of an welcoming attitude towards the vocation, living it in fidelity to God in the present moment;
 - personal accompaniment by the novice master by frequent meetings, as a means of personal growth and openness to the will of God;
 - studied elaboration of a personal project that allows one to be open to the action of the Spirit and to create channels of maturation in the following of Christ;
 - the exercise of human and spiritual virtues relating to religious consecration and the evangelical counsels in a

process of personal freedom and total openness to the life style of Christ.

- **Life of community:**

- living the deepest aspects of community life: faith in the presence of Jesus, acceptance of the brother as gift from God and sense of community mission;
- participation in community life , taking on responsibilities of service to the brothers with initiative and creativity;
- active collaboration in drawing up and revising the project of the community, as well as in the preparation and unfolding of meetings and community gatherings.

- **Study of consecrated life:**

- deeper study of the religious vocation and its roots in baptism;
- knowledge of the biblical, theological and spiritual bases of religious life;
- the study of the principal elements of religious life: consecration, evangelical counsels, community and mission;
- study of the charisms in the Church and of the charismatic dimension of religious life.

4.4.4. Formation in the charism of the Institute

a) Specific objectives:

- accept the Holy Family as model on the road to growth in the vocation. Becoming open through it to the contemplation of the mystery of Nazareth and the imitation of its life;
- openness to the person of Brother Gabriel, accepting him into one's own life with admiration and friendship , imitating his example and assimilating his charism;
- develop the feeling of belonging to the Institute, considering it as one's own family and getting to know its reality and identifying with it;
- know and live the charism of the Institute, assimilate its spirituality, practising the spirit of family and becoming initiated into its mission.

b) Means:

- Spirituality:

- frequent meeting with Jesus, Mary and Joseph in prayer, in the celebration of their feast, in reading and meditating on the Word of God, in the spreading devotion to them and in imitation of their virtues;
- openness to the person of the Founder through cultivating friendship with him, studying his life, his work, his charism and imitating his example; reading the writings of Brother Gabriel intended for the Brothers;
- knowing how the spirituality of the Institute showed itself throughout its history, the practise of the virtues that our tradition has contemplated in the Holy Family and the exercise of some of the most important devotions.

- Family spirit:

- daily commitment to building up a community “where perfect peace reigns, where all are animated by the same sentiments and the desire to love one another in their Creator” (Circ 15);
- the practice of virtues which express and nourish the family spirit in community relationships, such as joy, dialogue, communication, reciprocal attention, forgiveness, service, simplicity and humility;
- welcoming attitude towards families, the parish, the social environment and to those people with whom the novitiate community was in touch.

- Mission:

- knowledge of the Institute’s mission in the service of the Church and information about the practical ways of fulfilling it in the different Provinces and communities;
- introduction into “the apostolic activities proper to the Institute, learning how to achieve intimate union with Christ, first source of all apostolic life” (C 169);
- understanding of the mission of the Institute carried out in common mission with the laity.

- **Identification with the Institute:**
 - knowledge of the Institute by learning of its life and mission, growing in belonging to this Institute;
 - encounters with particular Brothers, communities and apostolic works which provide an entry into the life of the Institute;
 - forming one's own personality on the vocational project outlined in the Constitutions, studied, meditated on and assimilated as one's own.
- **Program of studies of the Novitiate**
 - knowledge of the Constitutions and Directories, becoming open to life project they express;
 - study of the life of Brother Gabriel, especially in the unfolding of his vocation, of his work and his charism;
 - knowledge of the history of the Institute, of its documents and the most important of its traditions.

4.4.5. Program of studies of the Novitiate

The essential studies at this stage are:

- a) Study of the Christian mystery:
 - The mystery of God
 - Christology
 - Ecclesiology
 - N.T.: Gospels
 - Moral: the Christian virtues
 - Sacraments: Eucharist, Reconciliation
 - History of the Church.
- b) Study of Consecrated Life and the Institute
 - Theology of Consecrated Life (*Vita Consecrata*).
 - History of Consecrated Life.
 - Constitutions (*Commentary on the Constitutions*).
 - Founder:
 - Spiritual profile (*Summarium of the Positio*).
 - Writings intended for the Brothers (*Selection of texts*).

- Christian Spirituality and Sa-Fa Spirituality (*The links which bring us together in JMJ*).
- History of the Institute (*The Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family is alive through time*).

The formators adapt this program, in agreement with the Brother Provincial, taking into account also the possibility of some studies outside the novitiate house (Internovitiate or others). In places where a two-year cycle of postulancy and novitiate is carried out, these subjects are adapted.

4.5. CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS STAGE

4.5.1. Place and modalities

“A novitiate must take place in a house which is duly designated for this purpose” (CIC 647). The place chosen for it must provide adequate conditions for reaching the goals of this stage.

In particular, it must allow the novices to give themselves over “to the practice of prolonged periods of prayer, of solitude and of silence” (PI 50), so that they may find “an atmosphere that is favourable to becoming deeply rooted in a life with Christ” (PI 50).

At the same time it must provide for the development of a community life inspired by that of Nazareth, the presence of competent formators, contact with the Church and the Institute and experience of particular apostolic activities proper to our mission.

To study the convenience of several Provinces or Delegations organizing a common novitiate.

It may also be desirable to share certain formative experiences with novitiates of other institutes, always with due regard to maintaining independence and the character of each.

“In particular cases and as an exception, by grant of the supreme moderator with the consent of the council, a candidate can make the novitiate in another house of the Institute under the direction of some approved religious who acts in the place of the director of novices” (CIC 647).

The requirements of formation may also demand that “a group of novices (to) reside for a certain period of time in another house of the Institute designated by the Superior” (CIC 647).

Given the objectives and characteristics proper to this stage of formation, no holidays in families are foreseen during this stage. The visits that novices receive from their family or other people are carefully planned with the aim of integrating them into the process of formation.

4.5.2. Beginning and duration

The canonical novitiate begins “when the Brother Provincial officially informs the interested candidate that he has been admitted” (C 173). In the near future, the “Rite of Initiation into Religious Life” will take place, as foreseen in the *Ritual* itself. Previously “there must be at least five full days of spiritual exercises” (C 173).

“The rite must be simple, sober and reserved to the community... it is suitably inserted into a celebration of the Word of God which sheds light on the nature of religious life and the identity of the Institute” (RRP p.15).

“To be valid, a novitiate must include twelve months spent in the community itself of the novitiate” (CIC 648). “The Provincial Directory may foresee a time of novitiate which exceeds twelve months, but the novitiate will not extend beyond two years” (C 173).

“An absence from the novitiate house which lasts more than three months, either continuous or interrupted, renders the novitiate invalid. An absence which lasts more than fifteen days must be made up” (CIC 649).

“The novices remain free to withdraw. The Brother Provincial may eventually send a novice away, on the advice of the Brother Novice Master” (C 174).

4.5.3. Periods of apostolic or formative activity

“The Brother Provincial with the deliberate consent of his Council may authorise, one or more stages outside the community or the novitiate house provided the activities are in keeping with the character proper to the Institute or at least useful for the formation of the novices” (C 173).

Such formative activities are not, first and foremost, directed towards particular apostolic objectives or for professional formation of the novices, “but rather to help them, in the very midst of these activities, to better discover the exigencies of their vocation as religious and how to remain faithful to them” (RC 5).

“This balancing of periods of activity and periods of retreat consecrated to prayer, meditation or study, which will characterize the

formation of the novices, should stimulate them to remain faithful to it through the whole of their religious life” (RC 25).

The length of these activities must be in proportion to the total length time of the novitiate. They are planned and reviewed so that they allow the foreseen goals to be reached as well as possible.

4.5.4. Formative project

This is set out at the start of the novitiate. It takes into account the norms and orientations of the Church, of the Institute and the Province for this period.

It is drawn up by the master of novices and his assistants with the active participation of those in formation. It is approved by the Brother Provincial and his Council.

4.6. AGENTS OF FORMATION

4.6.1. The novice

Before everything else the novice takes on the responsibility for his own vocation growth. He sees the novitiate as a particularly important period in his life, during which he opens himself unreservedly to the love of God and the renewing action of God’s Spirit.

In particular he undertakes to:

- strive to attain the objectives of the novitiate, accepting the mediation that the Lord puts at his service and in collaborating with the master of novices in everything which concerns his formation;
- make progress in his human and spiritual development, helped by a personal project, by welcoming the gift of his vocation, interiorising its values and disposing himself towards the separations that this process imposes;
- embrace the experience of the Spirit by giving himself to the life of prayer, accepting the will of God at every moment and by becoming “this new man which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its Creator” (Col 3:10);
- open himself to an intimate and profound relationship with Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:4), welcoming him as his only source of true wealth by following him decisively in keeping with the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family;

- enter fearlessly into the experience of silence, of recollection, of work and sacrifice carried out with love, the gift of himself, and living all that with the joy of having embraced the cross of Jesus Christ;
- live community life as a place of freedom, of love, of the gift of self and of fraternity, growing in unity with the other members “into him who is the head, the Christ” (Eph 4:15);
- make progress in identifying with the Institute, plunging himself into the experience of the mystery of Nazareth and welcoming into his own life with love the person of Brother Gabriel and his charism.

4.6.2. The master of novices and his assistants

“The scope of the novitiate demands that novices be formed under the guidance of a director according to the program of formation defined in proper law” (CIC 650). He “is the spiritual guide appointed for this purpose for each and all of the novices” (PI 52).

“The master of novices is named, after the deliberate consent of the Brother Provincial and his Council. He must be at least five years finally professed in the Institute.

His principal mission is to discern and verify the vocation of the novices and to form them gradually to the life of perfection proper to the Institute.

He is relieved of any occupation which could take him away from his responsibilities” (C 172).

He must be a mature religious, both humanly and spiritually, totally identified with the Institute and its charism, with sufficient apostolic experience and a doctrinal and pedagogical preparation for accomplishing his mission.

His principal duties are:

- to carry out a personal accompaniment of each novice, guiding him in his process of opening up to the consecrated life as a Brother of the Holy Family;
- with the aid of his assistants and the novices, to take responsibility for drawing up the formation project of the novitiate, for applying it and reviewing it regularly;

- to create the conditions for developing community life impregnated with the family spirit, which will allow the novices to enter into fraternal communion;
- to help each novice to find in his life “the indispensable balance on both the human and the supernatural level between times consecrated to the apostolate and the service of men and more or less lengthy periods in solitude or in community, devoted to prayer and meditative reading of the Word of God” (RC 31);
- to discern and verify the vocation of the novices, helped by themselves, by the community and by those persons who collaborate in the task of formation;
- to maintain sufficient contact with the family of each novice as an important means of knowledge and help in the formation.

The master of novices “may be assisted by a second master and if needed by other helpers named by the Provincial in consultation with his Council” (C 172).

They act as a team sharing responsibilities and duties under the direction of the novice master, and collaborating with him in the implementation of the plan of formation as well as “in discernment and decision” (PI 52).

Between the novice master and superiors there must be the unity necessary to guarantee formation by “showing toward the novices evangelical simplicity, kindness coupled with gentleness, and respect for their personality, in order to build up a climate of confidence, docility and openness in which the Novice Master will be able to orientate their generosity toward a complete gift of themselves to the Lord in faith, and gradually lead them by word and example to learn in the mystery of Christ Crucified the exigencies of authentic religious obedience” (RC 32).

4.6.3. The novitiate Community and the Province

If Community is an essential element of formation at every stage, it is particularly so during novitiate. It must enable the novice to practice those virtues which help to build fraternity, being at the same time a point of reference for the consecrated life of the Brother of the Holy Family into which the novice is initiating himself.

Community also gives him the opportunity to know himself better and grow in maturity, humanly and spiritually, in relation with others.

The religious community of the novitiate house must be especially vibrant and evangelical in communion and apostolate. It should show the novices by its witness of life, the joy of a life consecrated to God and the Brothers.

If all the “members of the institute are to take care that they cooperate for their part in the work of formation of the novices through example of life and prayer” (CIC 652), those who belong to the novitiate community must be especially so. Their relations with the novices must be open, calm and available, always in cooperation with the master of novices and in keeping with the novitiate formative project.

In its own project of life the community Brothers must consider its objectives as a formation community and the means necessary to attain it. They must commit themselves to creating a united body which encourages fraternity and help the novices to feel part of a new family inspired by the Holy Family.

4.7. THE FIRST PROFESSION

4.7.1. Nature

“Religious profession is the act by which the Brother commits himself by a public vow, to observe the three evangelical counsels. Through this he offers himself to God who consecrates him through the minister of the Church” (C 71).

“By his profession the Brother is incorporated into the Institute with the rights and duties defined by the universal law and the proper law and commits himself to work towards perfection in charity according to the chrism of the Institute.

The latter, representing for him God who is Love, commits itself to offering the Brother a life-giving community and the means to develop according to the Rule” (C 72).

Even if, through the prudence of the Church, the profession is temporary in the beginning, it has the intention of offering God one’s whole life without reserve or conditions. The novices are adequately prepared to understand and assume the generosity of this attitude.

4.7.2. Discernment and admission

Al acercarse el final del tiempo de noviciado, el novicio profundiza en su discernimiento vocacional, ayudado por el maestro de novicios.

Towards the end of the time of novitiate the novice deepens his discernment about his vocation, helped by the master of novices. He does this in a climate of prayer, taking into account the meaning of religious profession, the goals of the novitiate and the journey undertaken during this time.

Once his decision is taken, “the novice who wishes to commit himself to the Institute, makes his request in writing to the Brother Provincial of the time and in the manner decided by the Provincial Council” (C 174).

The request is accompanied by a report drawn up by the master of novices and his assistants. This evaluation of the candidate is very important since “it is for the director and assistants to discern and test the vocation of the novice” (CIC 652).

In this report the following points are taken in to account, as well as others:

- physical and mental health and intellectual capacity;
- relationships with family, friends and the environment;
- degree of human and spiritual maturity;
- ability to live the vows;
- spiritual and prayer life;
- manner of integrating into community;
- identification with the Institute and acquisition of its charism;
- disposition and aptitude for the apostolic life of the Institute;
- process of vocational maturation, especially during the novitiate.

If the novice is judged to be suitable for commitment to the Institute, “he is admitted to temporary profession” (C 174). If there is any doubt about his suitability “the Major Superior can extend the time of probation according to the norm of proper law, but not beyond six months” (CIC 653).

4.7.3. Criteria for admission

As well as the canonical requirements (cfr. CIC 656), for admission to first profession the novice must show signs of sufficient maturity in the following aspects of his personal identity.

- **In his human maturity:**
 - capacity to unify all the dimensions of their personality around the values, freely assumed, of the consecrated life;

- ability to establish a balance in himself of freedom and responsibility, with things and with God;
 - an attitude of responsible openness to his own programme of growth and to accept such mediation as will allow him to accomplish this;
 - maturity in affectivity and openness to others in an attitude of giving;
 - coherent values, living out the corresponding values and accepting necessary renunciations.
- **In his Christian maturity:**
- lively and profound experience of Christ, sustained by daily encounter with the Word of God;
 - authentic prayer life, simple and responsible, continued throughout the day;
 - placing the Eucharist at the centre of his personal life and appreciating the sacrament of reconciliation;
 - constant openness to the will of God in a humble and generous attitude.
- **In his vocational maturity:**
- identification with the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family and with the Institute;
 - appreciation of the evangelical counsels and the ability to live the same demands of the religious vows in the following of Christ;
 - responsible commitment to the community and habitual practice of virtues inspired by the life at Nazareth, which assist growth in the family spirit;
 - personal deep experience of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and of Brother Gabriel;
 - sensitivity to the mission of the Institute and aptitude for catechesis, Christian education and liturgical animation.

4.7.4. Preparation for the profession

During the last weeks of the novitiate, special care is taken to prepare the novices. They are given the necessary means, especially times of prayer and silence, to prepare themselves properly for profession. The

Ritual of Profession proper to the Institute is studied and the liturgical celebration in which the profession is to be made is prepared.

The words of the Founder are not forgotten concerning this: “The time of profession is surely one of the most important moments of life. To consecrate oneself wholly to God, and to undertake the obligation to follow the evangelical counsels, are the effects of religious profession. Our dear novices must therefore prepare themselves seriously” (Circ 12).

Before profession the novices make “at least five full days of the spiritual exercises” (C 173), as a more intense inner preparation for this moment.

4.7.5. Celebration of first profession

If there are novices from different countries, the Brother Provincial and his Council, together with the Master of Novices, study the convenience of the place, date and modality of the celebration.

The Church advises: “Religious profession should preferably be made within the Mass” (SC 80). It “accepts the vows of the newly professed. It begs aid and grace from God for them by its public prayer. It commends them to God, imparts a spiritual blessing on them and accompanies their self-offering by the Eucharistic sacrifice” (LG 45).

The celebration is carried out according to the norms of the Ritual of Religious profession proper to the Brothers of the Holy Family (cf. RRP 20-42). The Mass will be the one that corresponds with the liturgy of the day, the *Mass for the day of the first religious profession* or the Mass of the Holy Family (RRP 21).

The profession, for one year, will be made according to the formula taken from the Constitutions (cfr. C 73).

“It is received by the Superior General or his duly delegated representative who accepts it on behalf of the Institute. By virtue of their role, the General Councillors, the Major Superiors of the Provinces and the Vice-Provinces are authorised to receive the vows without special delegation” (C 75).

“Each Brother signs the act of profession which is kept in the archives of the Institute” (NG LVI). After making profession each one is “given the habit of the Institute... or the insignia of the Institute” (RRP 37), sign of religious consecration.

Then, the Superior “gives them the Rule of the Institute” (RRP 38), inviting them to observe it faithfully so as to live always in charity.

5. THE SCHOLASTICATE

5.1. NATURE AND AIM

After first profession formation of the Brothers continues “so that they lead the proper life of the Institute more fully and carry out its mission more suitably” (CIC 659).

“The Scholasticate is the stage of formation between first profession and final vows.

Just as Jesus in his hidden life at Nazareth prepared for the proclamation of the Good News, so the Brother, during the Scholasticate, prepares his life of total giving in the service of the kingdom” (C 175).

In this new stage of the journey of formation for the Brothers it is a question of “reaping the fruits of the preceding stages, and of pursuing their own human and spiritual growth through the courageous execution of their responsibilities” (PI 59).

The Institute undertakes to offer a “systematic, adapted to the capacity of the members, spiritual and apostolic, doctrinal and at the same time practical. Suitable degrees, both ecclesiastical and civil, are also to be obtained when appropriate” (CIC 660).

The Brother in his early years acquires a number of spiritual and human competencies, as desired by Brother Gabriel. “To correspond to such a sublime vocation and to achieve perfectly the aim of their Congregation, the Brothers must work carefully at acquiring all the virtues of their state and religious perfection, and also the knowledge necessary to be able to give a solid education to the children entrusted to them, or to fulfil in a suitable way the other tasks to which they are dedicated in the Congregation” (NG 10).

“The Scholasticate is in two parts:

- 1) In the first part the Brother deepens his theological and spiritual formation, prepares to pass on the Gospel message and acquires the professional competency granted by official diplomas.
- 2) In the second period the Brother applies himself to gaining unity of life in prayer, work, community life, and practises as a priority the activities proper to the Congregation” (C 178).

5.2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

5.2.1. Progressing in vocational maturity

Throughout this stage, the Brother makes progress along the road of integrated maturity, developing his personal faculties harmoniously, interiorising values and advancing towards the full living of his vocation.

The formation programme aims “at permitting young religious to make real progress by means of their experiences according to a unity of perspective and of life that of their own vocation, at this time in their existence, with a view toward perpetual profession” (PI 59).

In this period, “the young Brother experiences within him the equilibrium necessary for all religious to live his consecration to God and his apostolic engagement. He knows how to balance the demands of study with the spiritual life, life in common and personal development” (C 177).

5.2.2. Deepening identification with Christ

The Brother scholastic deepens the experience of God gained during the novitiate. He continues the process of identification and communion with Christ, making of him the central and unifying force of his existence and his formation journey.

The daily experience of community in following Christ, poor, chaste and obedient, allows him to grow in maturity of his vocation and strengthen his identity.

Intimacy with the Lord, the friendship in which he tries to live each day, is the root of his entire personal development and the source for overcoming conflicts and obstacles which rise up as he confronts new realities and formative experiences.

In the difficulties that the style of life proper to this stage offers him, he enters gradually and more radically into the paschal mystery which, through the cross, makes possible his transformation into the new man that he is called to be.

5.2.3. Continuing the incorporation into the life of the Institute

During this period the Brother continues to learn about the Institute and to be gradually integrated into its life and mission. From his own experience he learns more of the vocation of the Brother of the Holy

Family and grows more and more in the feeling of belonging to our religious family, assimilating its charism and engaging with its life and apostolate.

This progressive experience of the reality of the Institute helps him to mature in his vocation, preparing him for the definitive commitment in perpetual profession.

The Institute provides the Scholastic Brothers with a plan of formation, a community life and a team of formators who help them to live a complete experience of consecrated life, according to the charism of Brother Gabriel and the ideal of life in our Constitutions.

5.2.4. Preparing for mission and community life

The programme of studies in the Scholasticate is intended to help the Brother to pursue his “religious and professional formation” (C 176), thus accomplishing the desire of Brother Gabriel: “We particularly ask our young Brothers, who are the hope of our Institute, to consecrate themselves to study” (Circ 15).

Through philosophic and theological study, the scholastic Brother opens himself to mature faith and the development of his vocation. “He learns to know and to judge with a Christian and religious eye how to think, to feel and to act in the real world” (C 177, preparing himself to witness to Jesus Christ among men, according to the charism of the Institute.

These studies, which take place especially during the first part of the Scholasticate, help to deepen the paschal mystery, kernel of the Christian message, by allowing the Brothers to grow in the knowledge and experience of Christ, in the “only one which a religious should be aware of learning: the science of faith and of the Gospel” (PI 61).

5.2.5. Preparing for mission and community life

The preparation for the apostolate and gradual incorporation into apostolic life make the Brother’s vocation mature, at the same time as they gradually integrate him into the mission of the Institute.

During the first part of the scholasticate the Brother deepens his understanding of fraternity and mission, and acquires the means to insert himself. He “sensitises himself to the problems posed by the cultural and social evolution of his apostolic milieu” (C 177), and prepares himself to give his life for the sake of the kingdom.

In the second part of the scholasticate the practical aspects of this preparation are emphasised. The Brother, by “apostolic commitment and a progressive participation in ecclesial and social experience” (PI 62), acquires unity of life between prayer, life in community and the activities of mission.

5.3. AREAS OF FORMATION

5.3.1. Human formation

a) Specific objectives:

- to progress gradually in one’s identity, emotional maturity, affective relationships and personal autonomy as inseparable and complementary processes;
- to progress in a balanced personal growth, allowing a harmonious development of the qualities that contribute to build an adult religious personality;
- to grow in inner freedom, sense of responsibility, capacity for choice and commitment and personal coherence between principles and behaviour;
- to reach an affective maturity that allows self-transcendence and openness to others in a relationship of gratuity and donation;
- to develop the intellectual capacities that will enable it to carry out the mission of the Institute, openness to the world of culture and sensitivity to social problems;
- to be open, in a responsible and committed way, to a personal project of growth and improvement, without fear of the new demands of the formative path;
- to realistically accept the difficulties inherent in the changes that occur at this stage of formation and manage to adapt positively to the new realities;
- to be critical of lifestyles proposed by society that are not consistent with the Gospel and, at the same time, to be vigilant so as not to fall into accommodation and secularism.

b) Means:

- knowledge and appreciation of their talents, limitations, frustrations, successes and failures; integration of sexuality as part of their personality and control of feelings and impulses;

- take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions and show coherence in one's life between what one thinks, feels and does;
- solid intellectual preparation, with official diplomas, which assist personal growth and competence for apostolic mission;
- consolidate the habit of study and mastery of the necessary techniques;
- gradual growth in awareness of the reality of the world and its problems through study, news and the cultivation of virtues relating to justice, peace and solidarity;
- openness to the cultural reality of the environment in which formation takes place and efforts to inculturate the values of the Gospel, of the consecrated life and of one's own charism;
- progress in self-mastery, personal discipline, austerity of life, physical exercise, intellectual and manual work, balanced use of time;
- cultivation of personal skills and qualities at the service of the community and the apostolate, through the acquisition of aspects such as emotional intelligence, dialogue, empathy, positivity and assertiveness;
- taking personal responsibility in the area of one's own formation, in community life and apostolic activity, while developing creativity and initiative;
- progress in objective awareness of self and calm acceptance of one's own reality, making use of the necessary aids and interventions;
- practise overcoming the difficulties of this stage and acceptance of new demands for personal growth;
- put in place actions which assist growth in freedom and help overcome dependencies, fears and insecurities which prevent personal motivation;
- positive openness to others, through communication, mutual respect, friendship, service and teamwork;
- acquisition of balance and inner peace, emotional stability, patience and confidence;

- growth in an integral ecological consciousness that commits to the care of human life and nature in all its expressions;
- learning an appropriate and responsible use of social networks as a means of information, relationship and apostolate.

5.3.2. Christian formation

a) Specific objectives:

- deepen filial relation with the Father, finding there the meaning of his own existence and growing in those values which give birth to faith;
- grow in union with Christ and identification with his person and his Gospel, integrating from this experience the different elements of formation and unifying his own life;
- open himself generously to the action of the Holy Spirit, in a process of conversion of the mind and heart which gradually configures the Brother with Jesus and helps him to form his personality according to the Gospel;
- make a sense of Church develop, understood as the People of God advancing and as mystery of communion, and gradually committing oneself to it with one's life and mission;
- follow a programme of doctrinal formation which helps to deepen knowledge and experience of the Christian mystery and allows one to interpret life and history from the perspective of faith;

b) Means

- **Life of prayer:**
 - fidelity to personal prayer and meditation, progressing through them in the experience of God and making them a privileged space for personal conversion;
 - constant practice of community prayer as a place of growth for the community and of openness to mission;
 - openness to new perspectives in the realm of prayer, advancing towards a prayer which is increasingly adult, centred on the experience of the paschal mystery and open to the will of God;

- growth in the spirit of prayer, thanks to which one may unify the different aspects and moments of formation;
 - cultivate an intense sacramental life, living the daily celebration of the Eucharist and frequent participation in the sacrament of reconciliation as a place for growing into a new man on Christ;
 - practice of prayer in the midst of the difficulties which arise in this stage of formation, deepening through this the experience of the cross which accompanies one through the reality of Christian life;
 - uniting the life of prayer with the process of formation by trying to introduce formative experiences into prayer and seeing them in the light of the Word of God;
 - sensitivity to the poverty of mankind and the needs of the Church, so that prayer is more open to these problems;
 - days of retreat and reflection as opportunities for encountering oneself, one's Brothers and the Lord, and as occasion for serious review of one's formation journey.
- **Encounter with Christ:**
- progress in the personal and intimate relationship with Christ, maturing in the experience of allowing oneself to be transformed by Him, advancing towards the ideal of life in the Beatitudes;
 - experience of the paschal mystery, accepting and positively integrating the cross of the conflicts and the difficulties which arise during formation;
 - daily experience of meeting the Lord in the brothers, in the poor and in places of apostolate;
 - living meeting with the Word of God as source of daily conversion and personal growth;
 - uniting life around the experience, both personal and communal, with Christ;
 - witnessing to Christ in the various milieus where the life of the Brother unfolds.

- **Growth in the spiritual life:**

- knowledge and practice of spiritual discernment, seeking every day the will of God;
- spiritual reading centred on the Word of God as an instrument of openness to the experience of God;
- spiritual accompaniment as a means of self-knowledge and growth in the vocation ideal;
- the personal project as a way of deepening knowledge of oneself and maturing in one's vocation;
- development of an apostolic spirituality and communion which allows one to experience spiritual growth in everyday life;
- unity between doctrinal formation and spiritual life, by interiorising faith and Gospel values;
- openness to interior change, in an attitude of spiritual renewal and growth in the Spirit;
- development of the ability to express and transmit deep thoughts and reflections in the spiritual and theological field;
- ability to express spiritual experiences in shared prayer and meditation.

- **Sense of Church:**

- active participation in the life of the Church, especially the Eucharist, the liturgy of hours, and in times of prayer with the People of God;
- knowledge of the life of the Church universal and local, by study, reading, ecclesial gatherings and gradual participation in its life and mission;
- inclusion in the life of the parish, in line with Brother Gabriel's apostolic journey and the charism of the Institute;
- experiences which create a sense of ecclesial communion and shared mission, such as meetings with other communities and Church groups and participation in different apostolic situations.

- **Study of Christian doctrine:**

- follow a course of study of the Christian mystery which will help the Brother to live maturely his consecrated life and to accomplish his apostolic mission competently;
- efforts towards unifying study and spiritual life by practising a spirituality which will help the growth of the interior life by study of Christian doctrine.

5.3.3. Formation for consecrated life

a) Specific objectives:

- continue the path of growth of the vocation by living faithfully and maturely the daily response to the call to follow Christ in consecrated life;
- continue living the various aspects of consecrated life in a unified and harmonious manner by integrating the formative experiences;
- conceive the community as a gift of God, a theological space, a relationship of persons, a communion of faith and a spiritual experience;
- mature in active and responsible incorporation into community life, committing themselves to building a fraternity that will become a sign and leaven of unity in the Church and the world;
- prepare for the definitive 'Yes' to the following of Christ in the religious life of Brother of the Holy Family at the moment of perpetual profession.

b) Means

- **Vocational maturation and experience of consecrated life:**

- fidelity to the vocation, by striving to say 'Yes' every day to the will of God in a more and more personal and responsible manner;
- deeper understanding of consecrated life through study, formative reading and daily experience of following Christ according to the model in our Constitutions;
- relationship and getting together with young religious from other Institutes;

- balanced integration of all the elements of religious life through a personal programme of growth in one's vocation of following Christ poor, chaste and obedient, given without reserve to the cause of the Kingdom;
- deepening the life of religious poverty as the way to personal and community freedom, accepting God as unique source of wealth, sharing life and goods with the Brothers and giving one's life to the most needy;
- growth in religious chastity as freedom of heart, giving all one's capacity for love to God and the Brothers. This choice of life requires finding and learning one's own styles of love;
- practice of religious obedience and personal and community discernment as growth in the attitude of radical availability before the will of God, seeking it through its different mediations;
- becoming aware of the lifestyle he has renounced, which is opposed to many good and logical things for the spirit of the world, and taking on the new life he has chosen;
- responsible commitment to building a religious community inspired by the Gospel and the model traced out in our Constitutions;
- active participation in drawing up and evaluating a community project which favours personal development, fraternal life and openness to mission;
- acceptance that the ideal of community life in an evangelical and charismatic key is not fully achieved in real life; sometimes it is prevented by the circumstances in which people live;
- personal contribution to create and revise a rhythm of community life where all the elements of formation are harmoniously integrated;
- community moments to share the life of faith and the different apostolic and formative experiences, participating actively in a constructive dialogue;
- commitment to building a community open to the mission, which will become a prophecy of the Kingdom and an instrument of evangelization;

- cultivation of the attitudes and practices that make community life grow, such as availability for service, friendship, dialogue, fraternal correction, teamwork, sensitivity to the needs of others;
- consideration of the religious family as a community of reference in the different environments and circumstances in which formation takes place;
- to understand that community life is not a closed nucleus, but that it is prolonged by a network of external relations which inserts it into the ecclesial and human community and which demands of each Brother a particular way of relating.

5.3.4. Formation in the charism of the Institute

a) Specific objectives:

- grow into identification with the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family, integrating the new formative experiences of this stage;
- continue to learn about the Institute and feel a sense of belonging to this Institute, identifying more and more with its charism, its life and its apostolate;
- come to know Brother Gabriel more deeply by study and especially by experience, assimilating particularly his apostolic spirit, his love committed to the Church and his sensitivity for the neediest;
- deepen the lived experience of the Nazareth spirituality and the family spirit, by seeking new ways of incorporating them into one's personal growth, in keeping with the new realities of the place, the community and the apostolate;
- incorporate oneself more fully into the mission of the Institute, preparing oneself by study and apostolic activity to continue and make continue the work of Brother Gabriel in the Church, with responsibility and an attitude of availability;
- attain unity of life between action and contemplation, centring all the formative and apostolic experiences in the encounter with the person and mission of Christ with whom the Brother scholastic identifies himself more and more each day;

- acquire the skills necessary to carry out the mission of the Institute in the fields of the apostolate: education, catechesis and liturgy.

b) Means:

- Identification with the Institute:

- deeper knowledge of the reality of the Institute through information about its life and its work, study of its history and its charism, formative meetings with communities and apostolic conditions;
- progressive integration into the life of the religious Province, especially in the second half of the scholasticate, by becoming more immersed in its common work;
- interiorization of the values, options and orientations of the Institute, by deepening the reading and study of the documents of the General Chapters and other documents of the Institute.

- Experience of the Founder:

- pursuit of work, both personal and communal, of research and deeper understanding of the life, the work and the writings of Brother Gabriel;
- formation courses centred on the style of his life and apostolic mission; reading the writings of Brother Gabriel directed towards the laity and his correspondence;
- commitment to making the person of the Founder in the formation of each Brother and life of the community more and more present.

- Own spirituality and family spirit:

- deepening of our spirituality through daily encounter with the Gospel contemplated from a Nazareth perspective, intimate relationship with Jesus, Mary and Joseph and the daily life inspired by the values of the family of Nazareth;
- creative involvement to make the family spirit grow in the various community and apostolic situations lived during this stage;

- cultivation of virtues inspired most directly by the life of the Holy Family, such as the communal search for the will of God, prayer in common, shared work, fraternal charity, humility...
 - permanent adaptation to the new situations introduced by the scholastic formation programme, accepting and welcoming people and sharing with them the virtues found in Nazareth;
 - learn to share the spirituality with lay persons and to accompany the Nazarene Fraternities.
- **Mission:**
- live an apostolic spirituality which helps one to reach unity of life, by living the daily meeting with Christ in prayer, in community life and in participation in the mission of the Church;
 - study of the mission of the Institute and doctrinal and professional preparation for gradual incorporation into it;
 - studies in psychology, pedagogy, education, pastoral ministry, catechesis, liturgical animation and other subjects which prepare for competent involvement in the mission of the Institute;
 - knowledge of the pedagogy proper to the Congregation, inspired by the apostolic experience of Brother Gabriel, his writings and the tradition of the Institute;
 - obtain diplomas with valid civil and ecclesial recognition, which facilitate the exercise of the apostolic activities that the Brother will undertake later;
 - participate in apostolic experiences of mission, of solidarity, of engagement with the Church and the poor, in accordance with our charism and the formation programme;
 - in the second part of the scholasticate fuller incorporation into an apostolic work of the Province;
 - open relations with the lay persons who share the mission of the Brothers in the works and apostolic activities;
 - programming, accompaniment and evaluation of apostolic experiences, integrating them adequately into the corresponding formation plans;

- need to be formed for the common mission with the laity and to understand what the shared mission is. Knowing how to assume the demands that it has for the management and animation of the centres and the consequences for the community of Brothers;
- acquisition of some skills required by the common mission such as discerning together, working in teams, sharing formation, opening our houses and changing some economic habits.

5.3.5. Program of studies of the Scholasticate

According to the circumstances of each country, the theological and professional formation required by the Constitutions will be assured: “The Brother deepens his theological and spiritual formation, prepares himself to communicate the gospel message and acquires a professional competence, accredited by official diplomas” (C 178).

In places where civil studies are undertaken, an adequate theological formation must be ensured at the same time.

The specific theological subjects will be established according to the possibilities of each house.

A charismatic formation must also be provided to guarantee a deepening of the documents that guide the life of the Institute:

- “Identity and mission of the religious Brother” (*Document*).
- About Brother Gabriel:
 - “The challenge of a lay religious” (*Brother Enzo’s thesis*).
 - Writings intended for schools, parishes and families (*Selection of Texts*).
- Documents of the Institute: formation, mission, administration, etc.
 - The Mission of the Institute Today.
 - The Educational Project of the Institute.
 - The General Plan of Administration of Goods.
 - The Sa-Fa Family.

The formators adapt this programme, in agreement with the Brother Provincial, also taking into account the possibility of carrying out some studies outside the Scholasticate House (Faculty of Theology or others).

5.4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS STAGE

5.4.1. Place and modalities

The place and modality chosen to organize the scholasticate depends mainly on the objectives to be achieved at this stage. On the other hand, the criteria are different depending on whether it is the first or second period of the scholasticate.

With regard to the first period the following specific facts will be taken into account:

- the presence of a formative community which combines the particular conditions which favour the growth of the Brothers;
- the possibility of having a formation team sufficiently well qualified for taking responsibility for the formation;
- access either within or outside the house of formation for the theological/philosophical and professional formation envisaged in the formation programme and in conformity with the needs of the Province, the abilities of the persons in formation and the civil and Church requirements;
- the possibility of being in contact with the world of the poor and of being involved with apostolic activities in keeping with the charism of the Institute;
- the importance of sufficient contact with the communities and apostolic works of the Province;
- the necessity of guaranteeing unity and balance between the different elements of the formation.

In the second period of the scholasticate one must take into account:

- the existence of an appropriate community which will help the Brothers to be integrated into the life of the Province and be able to pursue the initial part of their formation, preparing them adequately for perpetual profession;
- the presence of some formators who can guarantee personal and communal accompaniment of the Brothers in temporary vows;
- gradual insertion into an apostolic work of the Province.

During the first period of this stage, if the number of persons in formation is sufficient and if all the necessary elements are present, the

scholasticate can be organised in a community set up for this purpose. In the same way, if the needs of formation require it, different Provinces may create a common scholasticate.

The second period may be organised in a specific scholasticate community or in communities of the Province prepared to accept the scholastic Brothers. In the latter case it would be a question of communities which, by their style of life and apostolic commitment, are a stimulus for growth in the religious life of these Brothers.

5.4.2. Beginning and duration

“First profession inaugurates a new phase of formation, which benefits from the dynamism and stability derived from profession” (PI 59).

The length of the scholasticate coincides with that of the temporary vows of the Brother.

The division of this stage into two parts is decided in each Province in agreement with the Provincial Directory and his own plan of formation, in keeping with the needs of the Province, of the scholastics themselves and the ecclesial and cultural needs of each place.

“After five years of temporary vows, the Brothers may be admitted to perpetual vows.

The period of temporary vows may be prolonged to eight years or more by the Brother Provincial. For serious reasons, the individual may himself make the request.

The authorisation of the Superior General is required for the prolongation of a ninth year” (C 78).

5.4.3. The formative project

The team of formators and the scholastic Brothers draw up a community project of life each year. In doing so, they take into account the norms and guidelines on formation of the Church, the Institute and the Province.

In this project are included the objectives of formation at this stage, the dynamics, the means, the responsibilities and the other elements of organisation. It must seek a way of harmonising in a balanced manner, the different aspects of formation, especially prayer, community life, apostolic experiences, the charism, and personal and community accompaniment.

It must “blend its elements together harmoniously so that an integrated life on the part of the religious concerned results” (PC 18).

It is approved by the Provincial and his council, interiorised by each Brother, assumed by the community and evaluated periodically. In this way it becomes a precious life-giving element of personal and community religious life.

5.5. AGENTS OF FORMATION

5.5.1. The scholastic Brother

The Brother himself is the subject and prime mover of his formation. With an attitude of availability and discernment he opens himself to the action of the Holy Spirit, who moulds his life and leads him towards the full maturity of his vocation project.

The Brother commits himself particularly to:

- try to attain the objectives of this important stage of his formation, by using, responsibly and decisively, the means that the Institute offers him for his “real increase in [his] their donation to the Lord” (PI 60);
- cultivate his life of encounter with Christ by trying to unify in Him all his formative experiences;
- participate actively in the life of the community, assuming its obligations and in feeling responsible for the formation of the others;
- welcome the mediation offered to him, in a particular way those of his formators, opening himself to a personal accompaniment that will help him in the midst of the difficulties of the formative journey;
- dedicate himself to studies as an important means for growing in his vocation and preparing him for the apostolate that he will carry out throughout his consecrated life;
- open himself to the apostolic life of Brother of the Holy Family, gradually becoming immersed in the mission of the Institute;
- draw up and apply in his life a personal project which will allow him to unify the different aspects of his religious life in experiencing Christ;
- try to assimilate the formation experiences into the meaning of the facts and try to overcome the difficulties of this stage;

- identify themselves in an experiential way with the charism (spirituality, spirit and mission), as well as with the actual life of the charism.

5.5.2. The formators

The importance of this stage demands the “presence of competent instructors. Superiors will specifically designate one to be responsible for the formation of the temporarily professed, extending in a specific manner to this level, the work of the master of novices” (PI 60).

“The scholastic Brothers are placed under the authority of a perpetually professed Brother named by the Provincial with the consent of his Council.

This Brother is responsible with his assistants to the provincial community for the formation of scholastics” (C 179).

The main functions of the Brother responsible for the scholastics are:

- “to continue their religious formation” (C 179), by helping them in their human and spiritual growth for the strengthening of their vocation;
- to organise the life of the scholasticate so that it will assure all aspects of formation in a harmonious and balanced way;
- to deepen with the scholastic Brothers “the spirit and style of life proper to the Institute in ecclesial openness” (C 179);
- to carry out a style of personalised formation in which the accompaniment of the Brother becomes a fundamental element of the formation process;
- to help interiorize the values of religious life that are clearly expressed in our Constitutions;
- to grow in the religious vocation by unifying all formation experiences around the core of consecration;
- to maintain frequent dialogue with each Brother to help him reflect, by the light of faith, on the various steps he has taken on his vocation journey and on his formative activities;
- to make the elements of community life the appropriate framework for the growth of each of its members and to encourage co-responsibility and communion of life;

- to accompany the apostolic experiences of the Brothers to help them integrate these into their formation project, and take up “responsibility for their professional formation” (C 179), so that they are prepared for their future apostolic life;
- to help the scholastic Brothers to incorporate themselves gradually into the life of the Institute and “prepare their entrance into other communities of the Province” (C 179);
- to keep the Brother Provincial informed on the progress of the formation process and the evolution of each of the Brothers, especially at the time for renewal of vows or perpetual profession.

The Brother responsible for the Scholasticate is assisted by other formators who together form a team united under his leadership. They share among them the task of formation and give witness to a consecrated life, which is joyful and committed, with a great love for the Church and the Institute.

The formation team takes responsibility, in collaboration with the subjects in formation, for animating the life of the scholasticate, the organisation of formative experiences, and attention to the needs of each member of the community.

In naming the formators care is taken that they are Brothers who live their consecration fully and with joy, that they are humanly and professionally prepared to undertake their work, capable of adapting and of listening to the young Brothers, and that they possess sufficient experience of spiritual life and apostolic activity.

5.5.3. The Community and the Province

Gradual inclusion in the life of the Institute requires, in this stage of formation, a community where the religious life of the Brother of the Holy Family is lived authentically. The scholastic Brothers need “a vigorous formation community” (PI 60) which lives joyfully the values of religious life and renews itself each day in keeping with the Gospel and the spirit of the Constitutions.

The Province creates the material conditions and provides the personnel so that the formation experience may take place.

The scholasticate community must create a climate which aids the development of the vocation of each Brother. It must include in its project of life the means which allow all the elements of religious life and the

various aspects of formation to be lived harmoniously.

“It is extremely important also to recall the importance of the role played in such formation by the atmosphere of generosity provided by a fervent and united community, in the midst of which young religious will be enabled to learn by experience the value of mutual fraternal assistance as an element of readier progress and perseverance in their vocation” (RC 5).

The first school of formation should be the daily experience of community life with its normal rhythm of prayer, reflection, study, discernment, living together, celebration and mission. A reference is the thirty years of ordinary life of Jesus in Nazareth, a period that structured his life, his temperament and his way of relating to God and to others.

Each Brother will feel responsible for applying the formation programme and actively taking part in the life of the community. He makes efforts to understand “to better understand the practical importance of community life in keeping with the vocation proper to their Institute; to accept the reality of this life and to discover within it the conditions for their personal progress; to respect others in their differences; and to feel personal responsibility within this same community” (PI 60).

The community meeting has a special formative importance. All actively take part in it and encourage each other to live more fully the life of the Brothers of the Holy Family. In the said reunion, they plan community life, review its evolution, and commit themselves in a responsible manner to growing together in fidelity to the pathway of vocation.

5.6. THE RENEWAL OF VOWS

5.6.1. Nature

During the time of the scholasticate up to final profession, the Brother renews his temporary vows. “During the years of temporary profession, each profession will be for one or two years.

The year of temporary vows begins with the closure of the retreat where they are made, to the end of the following annual retreat” (C 78).

This event is of significant formative value since it constitutes a new step towards definitive gift of self to the Lord. For the Brothers in temporary vows it is a new opportunity to affirm their vocation, renewing with greater generosity the yes given to God at first profession.

5.6.2. Discernment and admission

“When the time for which the profession has been made comes to an end, the Brother feely asks the Provincial, in a written and motivated letter, to renew his vows; in the contrary case, he informs him of his intention to leave the Institute” (C 77).

This request is a privileged moment for the Brother to reflect profoundly on his vocation, and to advance, through spiritual discernment, towards greater fidelity to the plan of God for his life.

The Brother makes use of the intermediaries that God has placed within his reach to help him live this time with authenticity. He profits particularly from the encounters he has with his Superior to clarify his motives and evaluate the path of his fidelity to God in his consecrated life.

“Before the Brother is admitted to renewal of vows the Brother Provincial proceeds to a consultation in keeping with the method laid out in the provincial Directory” (C 77). The Superior of the scholasticate community and the other formators draw up reports for each of the Brothers asking to renew. In doing so they take into account the same criteria as for first profession and the experience of the journey undertaken by the Brother during the corresponding period.

“With the consent of his council the Brother Provincial judges whether the Brother is apt to renew his commitment in conformity with the Rule. In the contrary case, the Brother will withdraw” (C 77).

5.6.3. Preparation

The Brothers carefully prepare for renewal of their vows as Broth Gabriel desired: “For us, dear Brothers, the renewal of vows cannot be a routine affair, but a precious occasion to renew ourselves in the spirit of our precious and holy vocation and to confirm ourselves more and more in observing the Rule, so as to be faithful observers of the holy commitments we have undertaken before God” (Circ 8).

“The young Brothers prepare for the renewal of their vows with a retreat of at least six full days.

Profession is normally made at the end of the retreat. However the Brother Provincial may decide, with the agreement of the Brother, that it take place at on a different date from that of the retreat but not later than three months” (C 79).

5.6.4. Celebration

“The renewal of vows is made during the Mass” (RRP 78) y se celebra and is celebrated “with the greatest sobriety” (RRP 79). “The Mass will be that of the day or the *Mass for the Rite of the day of renewal*” (RRP 80).

During the renewing “each of those who are renewing their profession approaches the celebrant and reads the formula of profession... At the end each one gives the act of profession to the Superior and he gives each Brother the traditional embrace of the Institute” (RRP 87).

5.7. THE PERPETUAL PROFESSION

5.7.1. Nature

In perpetual profession the Brother is consecrating himself totally and definitively to God in the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family.

It brings to an end the stage of scholasticate and the initial stage of formation in the Institute.

The Church greatly esteems this unique act whereby “a religious is consecrated to God forever” (RC 9). The Institute welcomes the Brother who commits himself definitively to it in order to serve God and the Church, realising within himself the charism of Brother Gabriel.

Throughout the whole of formation “the possibility of a perpetual commitment in the service of the Lord” (PI 55) is brought out, as a horizon which illuminates the various steps taken on the journey of formation.

5.7.2. Discernment and admission

After the experience of the years in temporary profession, and in a climate of deep discernment making use of all the intermediaries that the Institute has given him, the Brother sends the Brother Provincial a written request stating his motives for being admitted to perpetual profession.

The Brothers who know the candidate best, especially those responsible for his formation at the time, send information which will help discernment regarding his admission.

“Admission to perpetual profession requires the deliberative vote of the Provincial Council. Admission or non-admission to perpetual vows is ratified by the Superior General” (C 77).

5.7.3. Criteria for admission

To be admitted to perpetual profession the Brother must fulfil the canonical requirements (cfr. CIC 658) and have reached the degree of human, Christian and ‘vocational’ maturity which will make it possible for him to commit himself definitively as brother of the Holy Family. Some of the important criteria are as follows:

- **In his human maturity:**

- the ability to unite around a central experience all the dimensions and actions of daily life;
- possession of a degree of freedom and personal responsibility which help him to assume his own project of formation with maturity;
- acquisition of emotional maturity which allows him to be open with others in freedom and giving;
- disposed to face the difficulties of life and to be open to new situations with serenity and equilibrium;
- capacity to face his on-going formation with determination and responsibility.

- **In his Christian maturity:**

- experience of God and capacity to centre all the dimensions of his personality and lived experiences on Christ;
- habit of discernment and openness to the will of God in all the circumstances of daily life;
- harmonious integration of the life of prayer and action;
- capacity to live the daily experience of the paschal mystery simply, accepting the reality of the cross with generosity;
- experience of an apostolic spirituality and communion;
- habitual disposition to engage in the service of the Church and the most needy.

- **In his vocational maturity:**

- identification with the vocation of Brother of the Holy Family and growth in it with freedom and maturity;
- experience of welcoming the Holy Family and Brother Gabriel as models for personal identification;

- joyful and serene experience of consecrated chastity, in a process of maturing in the love of giving lived in community and shown in apostolic engagement;
- capacity to live religious poverty through personal freedom and in an attitude of sharing goods and life with others;
- willingness to live obedience which opens the heart to the will of God and the needs of the Brothers;
- qualities and willingness to live, with generosity and responsibility, as community life inspired by the model of Nazareth and characterised by the family spirit;
- preparation for complete integration into the mission of the Institute through Christian education, catechesis and liturgical animation.

5.7.4. Preparation for perpetual profession

The importance of the definitive engagement that perpetual profession entails demands that one complete “a religious formation more based on stages and judiciously extended over the different periods of the life of a young religious should find its culmination in a serious preparation for perpetual vows” (RC 9).

“The Brothers, before their final profession, make a spiritual preparation especially decided by the Provincial Directory” (C 80).

During this time the Brother lives an experience of internal renewal in an attitude of openness to the plans of God and availability to the action of his Spirit. The Institute, through those responsible for his formation, provides all the necessary means to live fully the fruits of this experience.

During this time the Brother lives moments of intense prayer, reviews the doctrinal and experiential tenets of his Congregation, reviews his vocational journey and actualises his readiness in the face of God’s call.

The Brother Provincial and his Council, in agreement with those responsible for formation, organize this period of preparation. Especially the dimensions of religious and charismatic life are taken into account. They count on the collaboration of other Provinces or institutions in order to find adequate means.

This preparation should be accentuated in the months immediately preceding the profession. In these months, “a sufficiently long preparation should be made, spent in retreat and prayer” (RC 9).

5.7.5. Celebration of the perpetual profession

Perpetual profession, which represents “the indissoluble union of Christ with the Church his Bride” (LG 44), is made during Mass. “The celebration of such a rite implies of itself a certain solemnity” (RRP 49) and the presence of the Brothers and people.

“The Mass of the Holy Family will be said or the *Mass for perpetual profession of religious*, unless the rubrics prescribe the Mass of the day” (RRP 46).

The rite of profession includes the call of those who are to be professed, the homily or exhortation, the interrogation, the litany, the formula of profession, the blessing or consecration of the professed and the formula of welcome into the Institute.

6. THE ONGOING FORMATION

6.1. NATURE AND AIM

Ongoing formation is the process of continuous formation that the Brother of the Holy Family lives from the moment of perpetual profession until his death.

This process “is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration” (VC 69) and takes place throughout life since, the consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the “new creature” who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ. “Initial formation, then, should be closely connected with ongoing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives” (VC 69).

The need for this ongoing formation derives from the very nature of the consecrated vocation which entails a response continually expressed to the call of God. The Brother needs to form himself throughout his life “to enrich continually the gift that he has made of himself to God” (C 181).

Fidelity to the religious vocation demands from the Brother an attitude of permanent conversion, since to “put on Christ” (cf. Rom 13, 14; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:24) is “a pursuit which never ends” (EE 45).

The charism itself of the Founder is a spiritual and dynamic reality, transmitted to the Brothers “to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth” (MR 11). This is why permanent formation engages not only each Brother in particular, but all the communities of the Institute together.

Permanent formation is an integral process which affects the whole person of the religious, being at the same time “spiritual, doctrinal and practical” (CIC 661). “There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to those which contribute psychologically, culturally, and socially to the fullness of the human personality” (EE 45). Moreover, given the mission of the Institute, this formation comprises “preparation and continual updating of the members to undertake the works proper to their Institute” (EE 46).

Ongoing formation makes possible openness to new situations in the Church and the word, helps the change of mentalities and the adaptation to the actual needs of religious life so that it may continue to be a valid witness and accomplish its mission.

6.2. GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF ONGOING FORMATION

Ongoing formation in the Institute has the following general objectives:

6.2.1. Developing the Brother's vocational project

The Brother's life is one of continual growth and it reaches personal fulfilment to the extent that he develops his human and spiritual possibilities. All through his life he brings his qualities to fruition by opening himself to maturing humanly and communally.

In the succeeding stages of his life he welcomes and develops the gift of his vocation of Brother of the Holy Family. In this way he makes progress in fidelity to the love of the Father who calls him to grow in the Son by the action of the Holy Spirit. He lives this progress in an attitude of permanent conversion which keeps him always open to the gift of his vocation.

Each of the stages of this growth of the Brother with its characteristics and goals, contains its particular difficulties and possibilities which demand a personal response and an adequate programme of formation.

“Christian and religious vocation demands a dynamic growth and fidelity in the concrete circumstances of existence. This in turn demands a spiritual formation which produces inner unity, but which is also flexible and attentive to the daily events in one's personal life and in the life of the world” (PI 67).

6.2.2. Facilitating community growth

The ongoing formation of the Brother of the Holy Family takes place in a community which grows with the Brother and which helps him to grow. In an attitude of openness to the familial mystery of Nazareth the communities of Brothers live a shared journey which makes them move forward each day in fidelity to the common project and which, at the same time, allows each Brother to find the right atmosphere for his own personal growth.

Formation in the Institute tries “to form communities that are mature, evangelical, fraternal and capable of continuing permanent formation in daily life” (FLC 43).

6.2.3. Promoting fidelity to the Institute’s charism

“The ongoing configuration to Christ comes about according to the charism and provisions of the institute to which the religious belongs. Each has its own spirit, character, purpose, and tradition, and it is in accordance with these that the religious grow in their union with Christ” (EE 46).

The charism of Brother Gabriel, continued and developed in the life of the institute, is a gift of the Spirit to the Church. It is a living and dynamic reality to which the Spirit gives impetus and develops throughout history.

Fidelity to the charism of our Institute demands from each Brother and each community an attitude of permanent renewal which opens the life-giving Spirit to all. To accept the charism supposes an attitude of spiritual openness and constant seeking which knows how to “integrate creativity within fidelity” (PI 67).

Brother Gabriel lived constantly this attitude of openness and spiritual seeking. The Brothers, continuing the work of their Founder, open themselves to a programme of continual formation which makes them grow in fidelity to the founding charism.

This demands “a continual examination regarding fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the Church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities” (MR 12).

6.2.4. Enabling the revitalization of the Institute

The life of the Institute and especially of its future “depends in part on the ongoing formation of its members” (PI 67). Fidelity to our charism, to the concerns of the Church and the needs of the world, is not possible without an attitude of constant renewal. Ongoing formation always brought up to date is an expression of this attitude and an indispensable instrument for making it grow in each Brother and in the whole of the Institute.

This continual revitalization keeps alive the readiness to live in a state of permanent conversion, attentive to the Word of God which calls us to incarnate the Gospel in our lives with joy each day and to announce it to those to whom we are sent.

The Institute lives in an attitude of discernment, as Brother Gabriel did during his whole life, constantly reviewing his reply to the call of God who spoke to him through the voice of the Church and the signs of the times.

The revitalization of the Institute is not possible unless each Brother lives this process of formation generously, making available the personal gifts he has received from the Spirit “for the enrichment, development and rejuvenation of the life of the institute, in the unity of the community and in giving proof of renewal” (MR 12).

6.2.5. Being faithful to the mission

The following of Christ in religious life “means that one is always on the road, that one is on one’s guard against sclerosis and ossification, in order to be able to give a living and true witness to the Kingdom of God in this world” (PI 67).

The Brother of the Holy Family, after the example of the Founder, does not live for himself, but for the construction of the Kingdom of God. For that it is always attentive to the signs of the times, adapting itself to social changes so as to be able to face “the challenges which arise from the future of the Christian faith in a world that is changing with increased rapidity” (PI 67).

The Brother lives a missionary spirituality that impels him to open himself with docility to the action of the Spirit in order to announce the Gospel. He nurtures in himself an attitude of constant renewal, attentive to the Word of God, to the calls of the Church and to the needs of society.

All the Brothers and the communities have the duty to adapt themselves adequately by preparing themselves to respond to the new challenges of evangelisation. That demands “formation which is solid and constantly updated, unity of life and action, an understanding of new realities, a renewing of forms of apostolate” (C 120).

6.3. AREAS OF FORMATION

The Brother “after the example of Christ who, in his family at Nazareth, grew in age, in wisdom and in grace, cultivated during his whole life the gifts he had received from God” (C 183).

6.3.1. Human formation

a) Specific objectives:

- continue to develop the natural gifts granted by God, by advancing in a spirit of self-mastery towards the fulfilment of his own human maturity;
- progress in unity of life by a harmonious growth of the person in whom are united in a balanced way all his human and spiritual dimensions;
- advance in the process of openness to nature, to self, to others and to God, by living the positive integration of values and lived experiences.

b) Means:

- cultivation of physical and mental health, through natural means;
- acceptance of medical care and psychological accompaniment when deemed appropriate;
- deepening of self-knowledge by attending to various life experiences;
- balance of intellectual and manual work, in the service of the human and spiritual values assumed;
- development of given talents by putting them at the service of the community and the apostolate;
- value personal effort, asceticism, rational organisation of time and other means which strengthen the will for the service of the growth of the vocation;
- acceptance of trials, setbacks, illness and old age, as the way to personal maturity;
- balanced use of the means of communication and new technologies;
- make efforts for growing in affective maturity in community and apostolic relationships; cultivate friendship among the Brothers and with other people;
- progressive knowledge of the social and cultural world, through study, reading and audiovisual media;
- fidelity to the personal Project, as an instrument of progress on the path to the development of one's own vocation.

6.3.2. Christian formation

a) Specific objectives:

- live a permanent process of renewal and spiritual growth with an attitude of openness to the action of the Holy Spirit in one's own life;
- unite all the areas of personal growth in the experience of God;
- open oneself to a deeper and deeper understanding of the Christian mystery so as to be more faithful to the condition of witness to the Gospel in the world of today;
- progress in spiritual discernment as the way to know the will of God in new situations of life and to respond with maturity and responsible growth.

b) Means:

- commitment each day to making real the unification of life around spiritual experience by living unity between action and contemplation;
- continual growth in personal and community prayer making use of helpful means such as reading, new methods, meetings with groups or communities, courses on prayer;
- intense participation in daily Eucharist, lived as "sacrament of love, sign of unity, bond of charity" (SC 47);
- frequent celebration of reconciliation, organising community celebrations of this sacrament;
- lively reading about the Word of God and the Sacraments so as to share this with the community;
- faithfulness to meditation and other daily times of prayer, taking part with a renewed spirit;
- spiritual reading and study of Christian doctrine to deepen awareness of the Christian mystery;
- knowledge of Church documents especially those which concern religious life and our mission;
- daily review of life as a means of self-knowledge and for growth in one's spiritual journey;
- participation in shared prayer groups so as to grow together in the interior life;

- taking advantage of special times offered by the community for encounter with God, such as the annual retreat or days of reflection spread over the year;
- taking part throughout life in particular periods of time offered to the Brother to “renew oneself in an atmosphere of prayer, study and reflection” (C 182);
- periodic interviews with Superiors and spiritual direction (C 107. 141).

6.3.3. Formation for consecrated life

a) Specific objectives:

- progressive growth in vocation, renewing and acting on motives and advancing in the generous gift of life for the sake of the Kingdom;
- live consecrated life more and more faithfully, being constantly open to the values of the evangelical counsels;
- make community life grow by building communities capable of helping the permanent formation of its members.

b) Means:

- deeper knowledge of religious life through reading, study, attending conferences, participation in courses or meetings, in the service of “a healthy renewal of religious life in the Church and for society in our times of “a healthy renewal of religious life in the Church and for society in our times” (CDRL 19);
- study and meditation of the documents of the Church on consecrated life, personally and in community meetings;
- specialising by some Brothers in in the theology and spirituality of religious life;
- times of sharing in community on the Word of God and experience of life;
- shared planning and reviewing of the life project of the community, of the Province and of the Institute, including in these projects ongoing formation;
- careful preparation of community meetings as the place of meeting in faith and discernment of the will of God;

- planning meetings of a community, provincial or “congregational” character for sharing the experience of consecrated life;
- taking part in formation meetings on religious life organised by the Institute or ecclesial or inter-congregational organisations;
- community practice of review of life and fraternal correction;
- exercise of co-responsibility in community life, in the development of the mission and in the functioning of the apostolic works;
- celebration of anniversaries of profession and the collective renewal of vows at the annual retreat and on other important occasions.

6.3.4. Formation in the charism of the Institute

a) Specific objectives:

- deepen understanding of, and the way of living, the Constitutions;
- grow in identification with the charism of the Institute and in personal and community experience of this same charism;
- renew and bring up to date apostolic and professional preparation for the service of the mission.

b) Means:

- greater and greater openness to the Holy Family and Brother Gabriel as models for identification, by prayer, study, meetings and daily imitation;
- deeper understanding of the charismatic origins, the history and the actual reality of the Institute;
- meditation and study of the documents of the Congregation and renewed efforts to live them in everyday life;
- experience of sharing our spirituality between Brothers and with laity, in communities, Provinces and the Institute;
- publications on topics related to the life of the Institute, both written and audio-visual; in particular the reading of the *L’Entretien Familial* is valued;
- search for renewed ways to live the family spirit, sharing it with people close to our communities, especially with the Fraternities and other groups of the Sa-Fa Family;

- meetings of fraternity between communities of Brothers, especially for reasons of formation or to celebrate significant events;
- living an apostolic spirituality that unifies prayer, fraternal life and mission, in imitation of Brother Gabriel's apostolic zeal;
- professional and apostolic renewal and updating, through study, reading, participation in meetings, courses and training courses;
- conducting specialization courses at the service of the personal formation of the Brother and of the life and apostolate of the Province;
- concerted effort to renew the apostolic life of the communities by impregnating it more deeply with our spirituality and making it more aware of the needs of the Church and the world;
- realization of experiences related to one's spirituality, the life of Brother Gabriel or spiritual renewal;
- formation of Brothers and lay people to animate the apostolic works from the deepening of our charismatic identity;
- at the annual retreat, to maintain the significant gestures of the Institute's tradition: collective renewal of vows, reciprocal request for forgiveness, celebration of the sending out with the singing of the Creed.

6.4. STAGES OF ONGOING FORMATION

“The following stages are to be understood in a very flexible manner. It will be useful to combine them concretely with those which may arise as a result of the unforeseeable initiatives of the Holy Spirit” (PI 70). Throughout these stages the action of the Holy Spirit and human collaboration lead the person to grow in faith, hope and charity.

This path may include moments of crisis which one must learn to interpret as calls for renewing and deepening the experience of consecrated life.

The Manual of Spirituality (SFS Chap. V) offers an itinerary of growth in one's spirituality.

6.4.1. The first years after perpetual profession

a) Characteristics:

This stage of ongoing formation includes the first years of the Brother after perpetual profession.

It is “the passage from initial formation to the first experience of a more independent life” (PI 70). The Brother is becoming fully inserted into the apostolic life of the Institute, taking on a series of responsibilities for which he was prepared in the preceding stage of his formation.

This is the stage during which the Brother is trying to live the religious ideal which he embraced during the novitiate and the scholasticate. He tries especially to live this by generous devotedness to the task of building the Kingdom of God according to the charism of our Institute.

This phase of the Brother’s life offers great possibilities for personal growth and at the same time has inherent difficulties. “The first years of full involvement in the apostolate are a critical stage, marked by the passage from a supervised life to a situation of full responsibility for one’s work” (VC 70).

During these years the Brother frequently experiences a certain disorientation in his spiritual and professional life. It is not always easy for him to confront the former experiences of formation with the reality which faces him and to adapt to new community and apostolic situations. Discouragement and tensions may arise.

At the same time, the new kinds of relationships which the Brother meets may cause difficulties around identity or affectivity.

b) Specific objectives of this stage:

- “discover a new way of being faithful to God” (PI 70) which follows the ideals and enthusiasm of the beginnings and which help the Brother to give himself with generosity and realism to following Christ in the service of his Kingdom;
- unify the spiritual life and apostolic activity and grow mature in a spirituality which frees as much from apostolic activism as from a spirituality without commitment;
- grow into identification with the vocation of the Brother of the Holy Family by living the different strands of this vocation in a balanced way;
- grow in the sense and value of community life, avoiding easy evasions in apostolic activity or in relations with the outside world.

c) Means of formation:

- daily meeting with Christ in prayer, in the Eucharist, in meditation on the Gospel and in the gift of self to others , opening oneself docilely to the action of his Spirit;
- close personal accompaniment by Superiors and spiritual direction which helps the young Brother to persevere in his vocation and transform the difficulties of this stage in to opportunities for spiritual growth;
- periodic meetings for formation and review organised by the Institute or other church institutions;
- special times of reflection and discernment when difficulties along the way loom particularly large;
- strong community life which stress the importance of times for sharing the Word of God and the experiences of life;
- aids directed towards accurately assisting the Brother to enter apostolic life and overcome the difficulties which this commitment engenders.

6.4.2. The “midlife age”

a) Characteristics:

This stage extends through the following years up to forty-five approximately.

It is the time of life when the Brother feels the need to consolidate his offering. Usually it is a period of responsibility and apostolic efficiency.

During this time there may arise the risk of life “becoming ‘a habit’ with the consequent loss of all enthusiasm” (PI 70).

In the course of this stage, failure or tiredness, often combined with a weakening of the interior life, can provoke a vocational, affective or existential crisis.

This is one of the times when ongoing formation must offer the Brother an efficacious means of continuing the journey of growth in his vocation and of spiritual growth.

b) Specific objectives of this stage:

- reorganisation of one’s life for the purpose of following Christ, by purifying personal motives, opening oneself to the action of

the Spirit and entering fearlessly into a deep experience of the paschal mystery;

- a process of acceptance of self and interior freedom, opening oneself to the new ways in which the Holy Spirit wants to lead the Brother;
- deepen one's understanding of the vocation of a Brother of the Holy Family by reviewing it "in the light of the Gospel and the charism of their Institute, to renew their original decision" (VC 70), and this will enable them "to give a fresh impulse and new motivations to their decision" (VC 70).

c) Means of formation:

- revitalisation of the spiritual life by prayer, advancing in experience of the Spirit;
- living out the biblical, theological and spiritual formation, and deepening the theme of vocation;
- renewed interaction with the charism of the Institute by coming closer to the person of the Founder and deepening the Nazareth spirituality;
- growth in personal responsibility, assimilating one's own mission and cleansing it of personal interests so as to seek only the glory of God;
- personal accompaniment, spiritual direction and other kinds of specialised help when necessary;
- a lengthy period of introspection which presupposes a break and a real spiritual renewal for the Brother with a preparation which will make sure of it being fruitful;
- ongoing review of the apostolic activity in the light of the mission of the Institute and the calls of the Church and the world of today.

6.4.3. The "mature age"

a) Characteristics:

This stage, which usually begins around the age of forty-five.

Often the high point of physical capacity will have passed, and greater fatigue and health difficulties begin to appear.

From the psychological point of view, one looks for stability in work; there will also be fidelity to internalised principles and greater capacity for respect and acceptance of others.

On the one hand a period of “personal growth” (VC 70) is beginning, normally marked by balance, interior stability and community and social integration.

On the other hand, it quite often happens in this stage of life that it “can also bring the danger of a certain individualism, accompanied either by a fear of not being in line with the times, or by forms of inflexibility, self-centredness or diminished enthusiasm” (VC 70).

b) Specific objectives of this stage:

- be open, with an attitude of conversion, to the plans of God for one’s life, refining certain aspects of one’s personality and making the offering of self “more genuinely and with greater generosity” (VC 70);
- renew apostolic motivations in the gift of self “with greater serenity and wisdom, as well as with greater simplicity and richness of grace” (VC 70);
- doctrinal and professional updating, with awareness of cultural changes and new theological and pastoral orientations, forming oneself to respond with joy and renewed enthusiasm.

c) Means of formation:

- reinforcement of the contemplative dimension of religious life through frequent and updated prayer and seeking out times dedicated to contemplation;
- doctrinal and professional updating through reading, formation meetings, courses or situations;
- taking part in meetings organised by the community or by other groups or communities for communicating and sharing interior life and apostolic experiences;
- interruption of ordinary activities for a set time of introspection and renewal, if the Brother’s situation warrants it.

6.4.4. The “advanced age”

a) Characteristics:

This is the stage of life where the Brother experiences physical, psychic and social changes which gradually remove him from full consecration to apostolic activity.

The progressive diminution of some personal faculties, the more frequent presence of illness and the progressive withdrawal from activity, put the Brother in a new situation full of difficulties and, at the same time, of possibilities of maturing. It usually coincides with retirement from work.

At these times the religious lives the experience of the apostle Paul; “So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

Normally at this stage of life the acquisitions of the preceding stage continue. One collects some of the fruits from the seeds sown patiently before. One lives in serenity and fulfilment or else in dissatisfaction and uneasiness not overcome.

No matter in which state, during these years of the Brother’s life, God calls him to allow himself to be led by the Spirit so as to be completely identified with the paschal mystery of Christ.

b) Specific objectives of this stage:

- accept one’s own reality with humility, in a spirit of interior freedom and distancing from things and activities, so as to give oneself over docilely to the plans of God;
- be open to new forms of apostolate by prayer, accepting the cross and by community, apostolic, social and ecclesial services adapted to new personal situations, in a “new way of living one’s consecration, which is not tied to effectiveness in carrying out administrative responsibilities or apostolic work” (VC 70).

c) Means of formation:

- “proper integration into the life of the community where the old brothers feel welcome and respected and where they are helped; support them with fraternal love and in the joy of waiting for the Lord” (C 186);

- formation meetings designed especially for the Brothers so that they may discover the meaning of this stage of their life and accept the mission the Lord confides to them with joy and generosity;
- dedication to new activities of service to the community and to apostolic works, adapted to the personal situation and in which the Brother feels useful and valued;
- presence in the apostolic activities that take place in his environment;
- openness to communication with others, giving witness to the action of God in one's own life and in bringing "one's wisdom and experience to the community" (VC 44).

6.4.5. The "old age"

a) Characteristics:

This stage begins around the age of 80.

"The community accepts the presence of the elderly or sick Brothers as a blessing from God, because they are an example of a fidelity made alive and of a dedication of one's own strength to the end. With their prayer they are a most effective support. The attitude that they have towards their weaker members allows the community to realize if it is truly a communion of persons and if it walks in charity" (C 186).

On their side "consecrated persons also should prepare themselves long in advance for becoming old and for extending their 'active' years, by learning to discover their new way of building community and collaborating in the common mission" (FLC 68).

"At the end of a life-long preparation, this last stage is one of fulfilment and accomplishment" (C 185). When the moment finally comes "for uniting oneself to the supreme hour of the Lord's Passion, the consecrated person knows that the Father is now bringing to completion the mysterious process of formation which began many years before. Death will then be awaited and prepared for as the supreme act of love and self-offering" (VC 70).

b) Specific objectives of this stage:

- "allow oneself to be shaped by the Easter experience, conforming oneself to the crucified Christ, who fulfills the

Father's will in everything and abandons oneself into His hands until one entrusts his spirit to Him" (VC 70);

- live in hope the journey towards "the supreme hour of the religious" (C 185), preparing oneself to give "the yes of the cross, the last step in his total conversion to the Lord, who is life and resurrection" (C 185).

c) Means of formation:

- a greater dedication to the life of prayer and contemplation, becoming a stimulus for the Brothers who are more dedicated to activity and interceding before the Lord for the Institute, for the Church and for the needs of the world;
- very particular help from the community and the Superiors to the Brother who is close to death, providing him, with delicacy and affection, with all the corporal and spiritual help he needs;
- for this stage it may be necessary to have a house prepared for Brothers who need special care.

6.5. AGENTS OF ONGOING FORMATION

6.5.1. The Brother

"The Brother considers himself as being always in formation" (C 183) and is the prime mover of his formation, collaborating with the Holy Spirit who moulds his life day after day.

Through ongoing formation he responds with creative fidelity to every new the call the Lord addresses to him. He also responds to the needs of the Church and the world of today. He is attentive to personal circumstances and to those of his surroundings in order to discern the will of God concerning his own formation.

"The Brother tends to the perfection of his state and ensures his ongoing formation, especially in his community, by being faithful to the Rule and living the charism of the Institute" (C 182). He nurtures an attitude of constant renewal in fidelity to the Lord, who calls him to grow every day in his love. He uses the ordinary means of formation.

Also, in a spirit of dialogue with his Superiors, he is attentive to the possibility of making use of extra-ordinary means of formation which the Institute foresees for personal special circumstances or as a preparation for some particular service to the community or apostolic work.

6.5.2. The Community

The Community is the ordinary environment in which ongoing formation takes place for the Brothers and is the preferred place for it. In it one lives especially significant moments of formation: the community meeting, the planning of the Project of life, days of retreat and reflection.

“Religious community is the place where broad guidelines are implemented concretely, through patient and persevering daily efforts. Religious community is, for everyone, the place and the natural setting of the process of growth, where all become co-responsible for the growth of others. Religious community is also the place where, day by day, members help one another to respond as consecrated persons, bearing a common charism, to the needs of the least and to the challenges of the new society” (FLC 43).

Every Community makes use of the necessary means “to create surroundings which are favourable to the spiritual progress of each member” (ET 39). They remain “constantly animated by the Gospel spirit, nourished by prayer and distinguished by generous mortification of the old man, by the discipline necessary for forming the new man and by the fruitfulness of the sacrifice of the Cross” (ET 41).

Some of the means that serve to promote the ongoing formation of its members are: the testimony of the life of each Brother, community prayer, dialogue, fraternal correction, the project of life, the community meeting, moments or days of reflection, as well as the library, magazines and other means that promote reading and study.

By helping each Brother to be faithful to his own formation process, the community matures and grows in communion and fidelity to its apostolic mission. “It is continually being created by its search for the will of God and constant revising of its personal and collective attitudes” (C 91).

Within the community the Superior has, among the most important of his duties, that of “promoting the ongoing formation of the Brothers” (C 195). His main duty being “the spiritual, community and apostolic animation of his community” (FLC 50), he makes sure that the means for doing this are always being updated. One of these means is the personal interview with the Brothers, during which he takes an interest “in their health, their professional difficulties, their spiritual life, and tries to help them in the true spirit of family” (C 195).

Taking into account the importance of the mission of the Superiors in this area, “it is appropriate to provide them with specific support in the area of permanent formation, in light of their task of motivating the fraternal and apostolic life of their communities” (FLC 43).

Each Community also takes responsibility for the updating and ongoing conversion of the apostolic works that it animates. It tries to be a source which enlivens the educational or parish community. It seeks out the means necessary for the formation so that all those who work with them have experience of updating and experiencing professional and apostolic preparation.

Apostolic works thus grow in fidelity to the Gospel, the Church and the society they are called to serve.

6.5.3. The Province and the Institute

The Provinces and the Institute are integral to the ongoing formation of the Brothers and the Communities.

In their respective areas and competencies, the General Chapter and the Provincial Chapter study ways to promote the constant revitalization of the Institute and its Provinces through the ongoing formation of their members, and review respectively the Institute’s Formation Guide and the Provincial Plan of Formation.

It belongs to the Superior General and the Provincial respectively, to help each Brother in his formation itinerary. The personal interview, correspondence, circulars, publications, are the ordinary means of great importance in animating the life of each Brother and each community.

The Major Superiors are assisted in this work by their respective Councils, by the various commissions or by the Institute’s Centre of Spirituality. They also have recourse to the help of experts or organizations specialized in the various aspects of formation. In certain cases, collaboration between several Provinces of the Institute can be very useful.

The Institute and its Provinces act upon the formation plans and create necessary forms and structures to ensure the ongoing formation of the Brothers and the Communities.

One of the major concerns of Major Superiors should be attention to the formation of Brothers destined to serve as formators. They take the necessary means to ensure that these Brothers acquire the spiritual,

doctrinal and pedagogical preparation required to carry out their important mission. They also attend to the necessary updating of those who already exercise this function. When a Province does not have the means to guarantee this formation and updating or when circumstances make it advisable, makes appeal to cooperation with other Provinces, to the help of the Institute's Spirituality Centre or of other institutions.

One of the most important times for guaranteeing attention to ongoing formation is in the appointments to communities, the nomination of the local Superior and others responsible for animating the Community and the apostolic work.

Significant moments for ongoing formation are also the participation in the consultations for the appointment of the Superiors, the preparation and participation in the Chapters and the work in the provincial commissions.

The Brother Provincial, in dialogue with each Brother, oversees how the Brother can dispose of time and special structures of formation foreseen for the different stages of personal growth. And also, when a Brother is going through a period of crisis which requires particular attention, the Provincial examines with the Brother the best available solutions to help him with his problems.

VOCABULARY

ACCOMPANIMENT

The accompaniment is an essential means in the work of formation. It is done according to the pedagogy that takes into account the whole human person.

It has two objectives:

- a) To help the candidate to know himself, to accept himself and to grow, to recognize the presence of God in his life, to discover what God is asking him, to find, appreciate and assimilate the human and evangelical values and to act according to them; and finally, to examine and evaluate the journey travelled.
- b) To allow the Institute, through the master, to know the candidate.

An adequate accompaniment is provided at two levels: personal and in community. The personal accompaniment is exercised especially in the personal interview, with a regular frequency and through the personal project of the candidate. The community accompaniment (of the group) is mainly practiced with the quality of community life, its organization (community project of life and its evaluation), the communication and, above all, the systematic meetings.

- Personal and group accompaniment as means of formation: 1.5.1.
- Personal accompaniment as a means of vocational pastoral: 2.4.7.
- Accompaniment, mission of those responsible for the vocational pastoral: 2.8.2.; 1.4.6.
- Accompaniment: progression and articulation of formation: 1.6.3.
- Accompaniment of vocational groups: 2.4.8.
- Accompaniment in youth pastoral: 2.5.3.
- Personal accompaniment of the postulant: 3.6.1.; 3.6.3.
- Personal accompaniment (Master of Novices): 4.4.3.; 4.6.2.; in the Scholasticate: 5.4.1.; 5.5.1.
- Accompaniment and growth in spiritual life: 5.3.2.

CHARISM

This term, which means “grace”, “gift”, is used to describe the particular gift or gifts that a person has received in order to make it (them) grow and put it (them) at the service of others in the Church. In this sense, we speak of the charism of Br. Gabriel Taborin as a Founder, a charism that continues in the Institute (C 3).

According to *Mutuae Relationes*, “the charism of the Founders is revealed as “an experience of the Spirit” transmitted to their disciples to be lived by them, kept and deepened, constantly developed in harmony with the Body of Christ in continual growth” (MR 11). The charism of Br. Gabriel Taborin, gift of the Spirit, gives birth to the Congregation and determines the nature, the spirit and the structure. This experience of the Spirit, made by our Founder, is a new style and a new grace to follow Christ and to live out the Gospel.

In this sense, our charism is the gift of the Spirit to each Brother to build the kingdom of God by means of evangelization through education, catechesis and liturgy, living in community the mystery of Nazareth.

Formation is the path followed by each candidate and each Brother to fulfil himself as a person by being configured to Christ through the «Consecration of his life to God in the Church according to the charism of the Institute» (C 2). Therefore, one of its objectives will be to help the Brother of the Holy Family to assimilate this charism. Formation will help him to contemplate the Gospel based on the mystery of Nazareth and the experience of Brother Gabriel.

- To assimilate the charism of the Institute: 1.2.3.
- Charismatic dimension of formation: 1.3.5.
- Charism of Br. Gabriel and identity of the Brothers: 1.4.2.
- Charism and cultural values: 1.4.8.
- Vocational process according to the charism of Br. Gabriel and prayer: 1.5.3.
- Study of the charism of the Institute: 1.5.5.
- Vocation of FSF and charism: 2.1.5.
- Personal and community testimony of the charism: 2.4.3.; 2.8.4.
- Work of the Brother and charism: 2.5.2.
- Vocational itinerary and charism: 2.6.2.a.b.
- Postulancy: formation in the charism of the Institute: 3.4.4.

- Identification with the charism of the Institute: 3.6.1.; 3.6.3.; 4.2.1.; 4.6.1.; 4.6.2.; 4.7.2.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute (Novitiate): 4.4.4.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute (Scholasticate): 5.3.4.
- Ongoing formation and fidelity to the charism of the Institute: 6.2.3.; 6.5.1.

CULTURE

Culture is the typical mentality that every human being acquires when identifying himself with a collectivity; it is the human patrimony transmitted from generation to generation. Every community, nation, region, tribe... that enjoys certain stability possesses a proper culture. Culture indicates its characteristic way of behaving, thinking, judging, perceiving oneself and perceiving the others. Each group has its attitudes and its set of values.

“The human person only accedes truly and fully to humanity through culture” (GS 53); hence the importance of defending the culture of man, promoting his dignity, his freedom, his sense of responsibility. Culture can be reached by formation especially. Formation and culture are inseparable. The first and essential mission of every culture is the education. It is to achieve that man be always more man, that he could be more, not only that he could have more, that is, that, through all that he has, all that he possesses, he knows how to be more and more man.

Every culture, with its positive and negative elements, influences powerfully in people and plays a decisive role in their process of maturation. The formation given to the candidates and to the Brothers must help to discover and secure the true cultures which will allow them to grow as persons, as believers, and to mature in their vocation.

- To live and develop the charism of Br. Gabriel in the different cultures: 1.2.2.
- Formation and cultural preparation: 1.3.
- Formation, culture of the candidate and cultural environment: 1.3.2.
- Family and cultural values: 1.4.7.
- Culture and formation: 1.4.8.
- Postulant and esteem of the values of his culture: 3.4.1.

- Formation of the Novice in his cultural environment: 4.5.1.
- Opening of the Scholasticate to the cultural reality of its environment: 5.3.1.
- Progressive knowledge of the cultural world in the ongoing formation: 6.3.1.

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is a process by which the Christian opens himself to the knowledge of God's will in his life. It refers, on the one hand, to the discovery of his own vocation and, on the other hand, to the constant attitude of seeking the will of God in all the circumstances of life, always deciding in the light of the Gospel (FG 1.5.3). This discernment can also be communitarian. In this case, it is a service offered to the person so that he understands what is his vocation and grows in it.

The attitude of discernment is of particular importance in the stages of initial formation during which the moral certainty of God's will in relation to the personal vocation must be attained. The itinerary to perpetual profession does not only imply the acquisition and development of specific attitudes, but also presupposes, either on the part of the candidate, or on the part of the Congregation, a continuous process of seeking the will of God recognized and examined through the signs that the Lord uses every day to make us understand his will.

But discernment is not an exclusive attitude of initial formation. It is also an indispensable condition to live in the perspective of ongoing formation. It is a fundamental dimension that accompanies the entire experience of the FSF, considered as an ever response to the Lord, who continually calls and challenges.

- To discern the action of God, immediate responsibility of the for: 1.4.6.
- Personal accompaniment, a help to discern the action of God: 1.5.1.; 2.4.7.
- The discernment of the call of God in the pastoral of vocations: 2.3.
- Stage of search, beginning of a period of discernment: 2.6.2.
- Stage of discernment and decision in the vocational itinerary: 2.6.3.

- The groups of vocation and discernment: 2.7.2.
- Postulancy, time of vocational discernment: 3.1.; 3.2.1.
- Growth and discernment as a means of vocational maturation: 3.4.3.a.
- The Postulant, first responsible for the discernment of his vocation: 3.6.1.
- To help the Postulant to make discernment of his vocation: 3.6.3.
- Discernment and admission to Novitiate: 3.7.
- The Master of Novices and his collaborators in the discernment and decision: 4.6.2.
- Discernment and admission to first profession: 4.7.2.
- Discernment and admission to renewal of vows: 5.6.2.
- Discernment and admission to perpetual vows: 5.7.2.; 5.7.3.
- Attitude of discernment of the Institute in the ongoing formation: 6.2.4.
- Community meeting, a place of discernment of the will of God: 6.3.3.b.

GROWTH

Every human being is called, in the first place, to life. That is presented as a free gift of the gift of God and, at the same time, as a call to the growth and development of all his human possibilities according to the plan of the Creator (FG 2. 1.1.).

The *Formation Guide* defines formation as the path to be followed by each candidate and each Brother to the fulfilment as a person, configuring oneself with Christ through the “consecration of his life in the Church according to the charism of the Institute” (C 2).

It is a process of personal and community growth, which is gradual, continuous and unitary, seeking the conversion of the person to the way of life that Jesus chose and that he began to live in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph (FG 1.1.).

For this reason, the task of the FSF formation implies both the education of the person, in his response to the call to live the “Taboririan” charism, and the holistic formation of the human person. In fact, if the

charism is a gift of God, it manifests itself in a way of being and acting that encompasses the whole personality. The FSF formation is a way of growth that lasts throughout life (C 181; 183). It aspires to make grow in the Brother the following of Christ for the edification of the Kingdom.

- Formation as a process of personal and community growth: 1.1.
- The formation promotes growth in the Christian values: 1.3.3.
- The Holy Spirit, inner strength that allows growth: 1.4.1.
- The community as a place of human growth: 1.4.4.
- The subject, responsible for his own growth: 1.4.5.; 1.6.1.; 1.6.5.
- The cultural values and the growth of the candidates: 1.4.8.
- The personal accompaniment or group accompaniment as a means of growth: 1.5.1.
- The personal project as a means of growth: 1.5.2.
- The prayer, primordial means of growth: 1.5.4.a.
- The Word of God helps to grow as children of the Father and as Brothers: 1.5.4.
- The Sacraments as means of continuous growth: 1.5.4.c.
- The study and the formative reading as elements of growth: 1.5.5.
- The shared life in community as a means of growth in communion: 1.5.7.
- The progression and articulation in formation and growth in consecrated life: 1.6.3.
- The vocation to life as a call to growth: 2.1.1.
- Penance as a means of growth: 2.4.9.
- The postulant, the novice, responsible for their personal growth: 3.6.1.; 4.6.1.
- The community, responsible for the growth of the postulant: 3.6.2.
- Ongoing formation and community growth: 6.2.2.

IDENTIFICATION

It is the process of being influenced by an agent (person or group). It is based on the fact that the relationship with this agent allows the individual to define himself better. If this influence does not lead to the maturation of the person, it ends in a negative identification.

Applied to the religious vocation (identification of the vocation), the identification is the human and spiritual process of seeking the identity that leads to the discovery of evangelical values and to the following of Christ in life.

Formation is the way that each Brother follows to realize himself as a person, growing in union with Christ and identification with the person. His own formation leads him to a progressive identification with the charism.

- Sense of formation. Identification with the charism of Br. Gabriel: 1.1.
- Formation seeks a progressive identification with the mission of Christ: 1.2.1
- Living models of identification: The Holy Family and Brother Gabriel: 1.4.2.
- The postulant commits himself to identify progressively with the charism: 3.6.1.
- Novitiate and maturity: Identification with the vocation of FSF: 4.3.3.
- Formation in the charism (Novitiate): Identification with the Institute: 4.4.4.; 4.6.1.
- Scholasticate: deepening the identification with Christ: 5.2.2.; 5.3.2.
- Ongoing formation: growing in identification with the vocation of FSF: 6.4.1.

MATURATION - MATURITY

Maturity implies a set of human and Christian virtues integrated into a harmonious whole and tending to reach the ideal by which the person lives. All this that the person has achieved a sufficient command of his instinctive forces and inclinations in order to exercise an adequate control of them and achieve his dignity as a person. The concept of maturity must be considered in a dynamic sense. Man is not man (a reality made), but becomes man. And he is making himself continuously. This is also valid for the Christian and for the religious.

For the candidate to religious life, formation must help him to interpret his life as a way of maturation and growth oriented towards his vocational ideal. To achieve this, we must take into account the different dimensions of the person: human maturity, life of communion, experience of God, apostolic action, vocational growth.

- Influence of family of the candidates and maturation: 1.4.7.
- Personal project as a way of maturation: 1.5.2.
- Conditions: respect for the person and his rhythm of maturation: 1.5.3.
- Personal maturation in the study and formative reading: 1.5.5.
- Progression and articulation of human growth and maturation: 1.6.3.
- Responsibility of the candidate and maturat: 1.6.5.
- Personal accompaniment and way of maturation n: 2.4.7.
- Vocational groups and community process of maturation: 2.4.8.
- Vocational itinerary: formation plan and affective maturation: 2.4.9.
- Forms of welcome: Aspirancy: 2.7.2.a.; vocational groups: 2.7.2.
- Postulancy: continuing personal and christian maturation: 3.1.; 3.2.2.; 3.3.2.;
- Postulancy and vocational maturation: 3.4.3.b.
- Novitiate: maturing the response to the vocation: 4.2.3.
- Criteria for admission to the Novitiate: human, Christian and vocational maturity: 4.3.1.; 4.3.2.; 4.3.3.
- Formation for religious life in the Novitiate, maturation of vocation: 4.4.3.
- Criteria for admission to the First Profession: human, Christian and vocational maturity: 4.7.3.
- Scholasticate: progressing towards the maturity of vocation: 5.2.1.
- Scholasticate: maturation of vocation: 5.3.3.b.
- Criteria for admission to Perpetual Profession: human, Christian and vocational maturity: 5.7.3.

MISSION

Mission is the expression of the initiative of God in us and through us, the participation with Christ in the construction of the Kingdom, the manifestation of pastoral charity, a gift of the Spirit.

The formation of the apostolic personality goes through formation for the mission, an indispensable stage in which the Brother comes to understand the meaning of the FSF mission, according to our Constitutions (C 14; 15; 18; 115) and acquires the means to carry it out (C 153).

Faithful to the charism of Br. Gabriel, the Brothers take as models his gifts of educator, catechist and liturgical animator; sensitive to the availability of our Founder to all kinds of good works in the parish and in the local Church; they orient their apostolate towards the education of youth and collaboration with the clergy (catechesis and liturgical animation). They form a community of baptized persons who intend to carry out the apostolic project of the Founder. They are, therefore, an apostolic community in which the mission assumed and realized by the local and provincial community is lived and shared.

- Preparing for mission and life in community: 1.2.4.
- Apostolic experiences, preparation for the mission: 1.5.8.
- The Christian vocation to consecrated life of FSF, participation in the mission of Christ: 2.1.3.; 2.1.4.; 2.1.5.
- The personal and community testimony in the mission: 2.4.3.
- Postulancy: activities in line with the mission: 3.4.4.
- Novitiate: identification with the charism of the Institute in the mission: 4.2.1.
- Criteria for admission to Novitiate: availability and initial attitudes for the mission: 4.3.3.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute: Novitiate, beginning in the mission: 4.4.4.
- Preparing for the mission in the Scholasticate: 5.2.5.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute in the Scholasticate: mission: 5.3.4.b.
- Ongoing formation: being faithful to the mission: 6.2.5.

NATURE - ECOLOGY

A sensitivity is growing in society that questions the treatment given to nature and the impact of the model of society and of some human actions on the balance of ecosystems. In the Church too, there has been a growing awareness of greater respect for nature, especially since the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudato Si'*.

In the concept of formation, we find a broad definition: “The person in formation is a being in relationship called to communion with nature and culture, with other people, with himself and with God” (FG 1.1.).

This is why the educational task must include, in an intellectual and experiential way, an education in the appreciation of nature, in its knowledge and in respect for it, which implies an ecological conscience.

Growth in an integral ecological consciousness must come to a commitment to the care of human life and nature in all its expressions. All of this is done with the aim of advancing in the process of opening up to nature, to oneself, to others and to God, in a path of positive integration of values and lived experiences.

- Discovering nature as a common home and the involvement of human action in the environment: 1.3.3.
- Formation in the Postulancy:
 - Human formation: 3.4.1.
 - Affective education, cordial opening to nature: 3.4.1.
 - Education in the contemplation of nature: 3.4.2.
- Formation in the Novitiate:
 - Integrative relationship with nature: 4.4.1.
- Formation in the Scholasticate:
 - Ecological awareness and care for nature: 5.3.1.
- Ongoing formation:
 - Openness and integration in the totality of values and experiences: 6.3.1.

NAZARENE FRATERNITIES

The Nazarene Fraternities are born of the irradiation of the Taborinian charism by the Brothers of the Holy Family and of the spiritual sensitivity

of some lay people who, on coming into contact with the charism of Brother Gabriel, have seen in it a sure, accessible and current way of living their own vocation to holiness, inspired by the mystery of Nazareth.

It is a sign of the times, a gift of the Spirit to the Church that we have discovered in the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

The Nazarene Fraternities are constituted as an Association of the Faithful in the Church, associated with the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family of Belley, in conformity with CIC canon 677, §2.

The General Council of the Institute, following an orientation of the General Chapter of 1989, decided to create the Association of Nazarene Fraternities in its meeting of January 7 and 8, 1993. Its existence and relationship with the Institute are recognised in article 9 of the 1995 General Directory (Plan of Life).

The spirituality of the Institute can be shared at various levels and in various forms (groups of young people, associations of parents and educators, friends and relatives of Brothers...). Among these forms, the Nazarene Fraternities constitute an Association created to live and irradiate in the Church, according to their statutes, the Nazarene charism of Brother Gabriel Taborin. The Institute, according to its competencies and possibilities, animates and coordinates the groups and persons who wish to share its spirituality or collaborate in its mission, so that they may be inspired by the authentic spirit of the religious family of the Brothers (CIC 677; GD 9).

- Lay associates in the Nazarene Fraternities... contribute to the formation of the Brothers through the witness of different vocations united by the same charism and through formation and apostolate activities shared between Brothers and lay people: 1.4.4.
- To learn to share one's spirituality with the laity and to accompany the Nazarene Fraternities: 4.4.5. Scholasticate.

PROJECT

The project can be personal or community. The latter is done at different levels (Community, Province, Institute).

The personal project is an important means in the itinerary of formation. It responds to a personal attitude that expresses what the individual wants to do with one's own life. It is an aid in the growth of the person. This

project starts from what one really is, from what one identifies himself with. It specifies the objectives and values to be achieved and indicates the effective means to accomplish them.

It is not static, but dynamic. It is not done once for all. It is a project under permanent review. It is a path.

In religious life, the personal project is born of the need to personalize the itinerary of growth and the means to reach the configuration with Christ. It is related to the community project. The consistency of the community project depends on the fulfilment of the personal projects, and the latter find their scope in the community project.

- The personal project: 1.5.2.
- The community project: 1.5.2.
- Human formation in the Postulancy: developing a personal project: 3.4.1.
- Formation for consecrated life in the Postulancy: elaboration and revision: 3.4.3.
- The Postulant: goals in line with his personal project: 3.6.1.
- The Novice is committed to progress, helped by his personal project: 4.6.1.
- The Scholasticate: a personal project of growth: 5.3.1.
- The personal project as a way in the knowledge of the own person: 5.3.2.
- Integration of the elements of religious life in a personal project: 5.3.3.
- Means of ongoing formation: fidelity to the personal project...: 6.3.1.

RESPONSIBILITY

The life of the FSF is a time of dialogue between the initiative of God that calls and directs and his freedom that gradually assumes the commitments of his own formation. The candidate to religious life or the Brother has the first responsibility to say yes to the call that he has received and accept all the consequences of this first responsibility, taking care of the virtues of docility to the Holy Spirit, opening his life to the presence and action of the Spirit, freely deciding to let himself be shaped by Him.

He accepts the mediations that the Lord puts in the service of his development: that of the community, where he integrates himself with confidence and collaborates with responsibility, while the community offers him a model of life and becomes responsible of his growth; that of the formators and structures of formation with which the community welcomes him and accompanies him; that of each Brother who lives with him the same experience and with prayer and testimony they contribute to support his vocation; that of the prayer, spiritual direction, study, fraternal relationships...

All this is an aid offered to the person who is in the process of formation, so that he can formulate responsibly his decisions before God, the Church and his own conscience.

- Personalization – responsibility: 1.6.1.
- Responsabilization: 1.6.5.
- Pastoral of vocations: all Brothers are responsible...: 2.3; 2.8.2.
- Condition of personal accompaniment: freedom and responsibility: 2.4.7.
- Postulancy: responding to the divine call with responsibility: 3.2.2.
- Criteria for admission to Postulancy: freedom and responsibility: 3.3.1. 3.4.1.; acceptance of responsibilities: 3.4.1.; 3.4.3.; integration with responsibility in community life: 3.6.1.
- The community of Postulancy: all the Brothers of the community are responsible: 3.6.2.; the formators assume directly the responsibility for formation: 3.6.3.
- Novitiate: organization of the community develops responsibility: 4.4.1.; the responsibilities of service...: 4.4.3.; responsibilities of the master of novices: 4.6.2.; preparation of the project of formation: 4.6.2.; the young Brother, agent of his formation: 5.5.1.
- The Superior of Scholastics promotes responsibility in the community: 5.5.2.
- Each Brother feels responsible within the community: 5.5.3.
- Ongoing formation: exercise of co-responsibility in community life: 6.3.3.
- The Brother, main responsible for his ongoing formation: 6.5.1.

Sa-Fa FAMILY

“The ‘Sa-Fa Family’ is made up of the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family and the persons and associations that share its spirituality and mission in different degrees of participation and commitment (Orientation 7 of the 36th General Chapter).

The conception of the Church as the People of God and the Church as communion, promoted by the Second Vatican Council, have been key to the development of a process of evaluation of each of the vocations and the complementarity between them, as well as the sharing of personal and institutional charisms”.

The incorporation of lay people into the educational and catechetical works of the Institute has generated a process of co-responsibility in the mission and a feeling of belonging to the institution... Some lay people close to the Brothers’ communities have shown a certain interest in the spirituality proper to the Institute.

The processes have continued until we see ripened fruits in the present, also among us. The 2007 reform of the Constitutions of the Brothers of the Holy Family confirms this by adding No. 4bis: “The Brothers welcome as a gift of the Holy Spirit the interest shown by some persons and groups towards their charism. They see in this a call to live ecclesial communion in the complementarity of vocations. Their charism can be shared with the laity and priests who are invited to participate, in various ways, in the spirituality and mission of the Institute” (Sa-Fa Family).

- The lay associates in the Nazarene Fraternities, and the other members of the Sa-Fa Family contribute to the formation of the Brothers: 1.4.4.
- The Sa-Fa Family has its own spirituality: 1.5.5.
- The characteristic pedagogy of our Institute continues to be updated today by the Sa-Fa Family: 1.5.6.
- The youth ministry of the Sa-Fa Family will have this “vocational” orientation: 2.2.
- To be a transmitter of God’s call... in particular those of the Sa-Fa Family: 2.3.
- To participate in the meetings and celebrations of the Sa-Fa Family: 2.4.3.

- The pastoral ministry of vocations is integrated into the daily development of the general pastoral ministry of the educational centres of the Sa-Fa Family: 2.5.1.
- Documents that guide the life of the Institute: the Sa-Fa Family: 4.4.6.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute by sharing it with people close to our communities, especially with the Fraternities and other groups of the Sa-Fa Family: 6.3.4.

SENSE OF BELONGING

The sense of belonging is defined as a person's satisfaction at feeling part of a group. The person, in this way, feels identified with the rest of the members. This identification confers an active behavior to the individual who is willing to defend his group and show his adhesion or support to the community.

The sense of belonging was a value that Brother Gabriel took very seriously and which was clearly manifested in his expression “spirit of body and family spirit”, proposed as a feature of identity. It is also seen in his insistence on putting the common interest of the personnel first, defending the Congregation at all times and giving good witness as a member of it.

In the *Formation Guide*, the sense of belonging appears to express belonging to the Church and the Institute.

Thus it says that formation has a clear ecclesial dimension that allows the person to “understand and love his belonging to the Church” (FG 1.2.2).

At the same time, “the candidate, in sharing our consecrated life, discovers that the project of life expressed in our Constitutions is his own, and he progressively accepts it as his own, until he acquires a deep sense of belonging” (FG 1.2.3).

In this sense, they insist on identification with the Institute through knowledge of its charism, its life and its apostolate.

Belonging to a vocational group where the path taken is shared (FG 2.6.2):

- Novitiate:
 - To grow in a sense of belonging to the Church, its life and mission: 4.2.4.
 - Sense of belonging to the Institute by knowing its reality and identifying with it: 4.4.4.
 - Belonging to a new family inspired by the Holy Family: 4.6.3.
- Scholasticate:
 - Experiential commitment to the charism and apostolic mission: 5.2.3.
 - Knowledge of the charism and of Brother Gabriel: 5.3.4.

SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE

The spirit of a Congregation is its most precious component. It is a way of being, of feeling and of living that animates the whole life, the relations with God and with people. The religious consecration of the Brothers finds its fullness in the fraternal communion that is explained by the communion of life, apostolic action and prayer. The family spirit gives the community its characteristic physiognomy, vivifies it inwardly and constitutes its cohesion. It is inspired by the vital bonds that united Jesus, Mary and Joseph in their life of family at Nazareth. The Brothers strive to acquire the spirit that reigned in this family: a spirit of union, humility, obedience, sacrifice, detachment and admiration. In Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph prayed, worked, and loved each other.

In the same way, the Brothers, in their respective communities strive to live closely united in prayer, work and mutual love.

They try to revive the same virtues as the Patron Saints, whom they imitate. The virtues that characterize the spirit of the Institute can be summed up in the spirit of charity and the family spirit. This spirit is embodied in the own virtues of the FSF and in those which manifest and nourish the family spirit: joy, dialogue, mutual attention, forgiveness, simplicity, helpfulness, service...

All basic or permanent formation of a Brother of the Holy Family should tend to the imitation of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

- Our spirituality and the family spirit are inspired by the Holy Family: 2.1.5.

- Community testimony and family spirit: 2.4.3.
- Aspirancy: family spirit in the aspirants-formators relationship: 2.7.2.
- Community testimony lived in an environment of family: 2.8.3.
- Postulant: dispositions to grow in the family spirit: 3.3.3.
- Postulancy: formation in the charism of the Institute: a) to enter into the experience of the family spirit: 3.4.4.; b) to put into practice the virtues that increase the family spirit: 3.4.4.b.
- Postulancy: offering the possibility of living the family spirit in a community: 3.6.3.
- Novitiate: to imbue of the family spirit: 4.2.1.
- Novitiate: to know and live the charism practising the family spirit: 4.4.4.
- To create the conditions for the development of a community life imbued by the family spirit: 4.6.2.
- Criteria for admission (to Novitiate): the family spirit: 4.7.3.
- Formation in the charism (Scholasticate): to deepen the experience of the family spirit: 5.3.4.
- Criteria for admission to Perpetual Profession. A community life characterized by the family spirit: 5.7.3.
- Formation in the charism in ongoing formation: to live the family spirit: 6.3.4.

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is the experience of God in Christ, embodied in a tradition of prayer and inner discipline. It is about organizing life around a central point. For us, FSF, it is centred on the Holy Family. Our own spirituality is presented as a complete organization of our Christian life of religious centre on the mystery of Nazareth. It is what we called “Nazarene” Spirituality, that is, in Nazareth we can find the school that will teach us more easily to live the Gospel, because in Nazareth, Jesus lived it for 30 years with Mary and Joseph, before proposing it to others. The spiritual commitment of the FSF is to try to live in Nazareth with JMJ, to act in such a way that they will continue to live and be visible in their lives, in their attitudes, in their virtues, in their relations with God

and with their neighbours. We must be able to paraphrase St Paul saying: I do not live, but rather it is Christ who continues in me his Nazarene life with Mary and Joseph (cf. Gal 2:20). In other words, it is “to prolong in our life and in the community, the dynamism, life, grace, spirituality of the Holy Family of Nazareth” (*On the Way to Nazareth*, p. 92).

- The spirituality and the spirit of the Institute are inspired by the Holy Family: 2.1.5
- Criteria for admission (to Postulancy): to live the spirituality of the Institute: 3.3.3.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute: introduction to the Nazarene Spirituality: 3.4.4.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute in the Novitiate: spirituality: 4.4.4.b.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute in the Scholasticate: to deepen the Nazarene Spirituality: 5.3.4.
- Ongoing formation and fidelity to the mission: The Brother lives a spirituality: 6.2.5.
- Formation in the charism of the Institute: to share our spirituality: 6.3.4.

TESTIMONY

The FSF, like any religious, feels called to live the baptismal grace with a greater plenitude and radicality, totally adhering to God, loved above all, in the following of Christ chaste, poor and obedient.

The practice of the evangelical counsel is a rich experience in evangelical and human contents. The Holy Spirit makes us a presence that witnesses and communicates these values. The religious are among men witnesses of the Good News of Love. We must give personal and community testimony. Our Founder said: “...that a Brother of the Holy Family should never be seen or heard of without one becoming better or being edified” (NG 311), and our Constitutions invite our communities “to give testimony, lived generously in an atmosphere of family” (C 149), which can be perceived as an invitation to share our vocation. This shows the importance of testimony in the formation of the Brothers.

The formators should be for the young people in formation a close and clear testimony of our religious life.

- Through apostolic experiences, we give testimony of Christ: 1.5.8.
- Personal and community testimony in the pastoral of vocations: 2.4.3.
- Testimony of life in the personal accompaniment: 2.4.7.
- The testimony of personal life of the Brothers is a means to arise vocations: 2.5.2.
- Testimony of common life of the formators in the Aspirancy: 2.7.2.a.
- The testimony lived in an environment of family is a means in the pastoral of vocations: 2.8.3
- The community of the Novitiate must give testimony of life to the novices: 4.6.3.
- Scholasticate: testimony of Christ...: 5.3.2.; to bear witness of a joyful and committed religious life: 5.5.2.
- Ongoing formation. Testimony of life of each Brother: 6.5.2.

UNITY OF LIFE

This experience applies to the spiritual life and expresses the unity between fraternal communion, apostolate and prayer. The Holy Spirit leads the FSF to an existential option that is simultaneously apostolic and religious.

To this end, he gives the grace of unity to live the dynamism of the apostolic action and the fullness of religious life, in a single movement of charity towards God and towards the neighbour.

This life is not reduced to a fixed scheme: it is a project under permanent construction. Its unity is not static, is a unity in tension and in state of search for a balance.

One of the tasks of formation is to help the candidate for consecrated life as a Brother of the Holy Family and the Brother himself, during all the stages of his formation, to acquire this unity of life, this capacity to harmonize the apostolic dimension with the life of prayer and community. The example of Christ, whose food was to do his Father's will, is the constant reference point for a unified life.

It is about finding God without abandoning the world. The FSF must be formed at the same time as a man of God, open to the sense of his saving presence, capable of continually receiving the call and offering himself to Him, sensitive to the significance and the demands of the apostolic service.

- Novitiate: To unify life around the experience of God...: 4.2.2.; To realize the unity in his life between contemplation and apostolic action: 4.4.2.; The unity of life around the personal experience of Christ: 4.4.2.; Balance in the human and spiritual plane...: 4.6.2.
- Scholasticate: Unity of life in prayer, work and community life: 5.1.; Balance, to live his consecration and his apostolic commitment: 5.2.2.; 5.3.2.; Unity of life between action and contemplation: 5.2.5.; 5.3.4; 1 The union with Christ... unifying his own life: 5.3.2.; To unify the different aspects of his life...: 5.5.1.; To meet all the aspects of formation in a harmonious and balanced way: 5.5.2.; 5.5.3.
- Perpetual Profession, criteria for admission: Harmonious integration of the life of prayer and action: 5.7.3.
- Ongoing formation: Fidelity to mission demands unity of life and action...: 6.2.5.; Progression in the unity of life...: 6.3.1.; 6.3.2.; To live an apostolic spirituality that unifies prayer, fraternal life and mission: 6.3.4.b.; To unify spiritual life and the apostolic action: 6.4.1.b.

VOCATION

Vocation is a gift and a commitment. It is gift, since each man receives from God personally the invitation to realize his being as a historical response, free and responsible, to the creative and saving act of God; it is a commitment because this response is fulfilled with care.

The FSF vocation is also a gift and a commitment. It is a grace of the Father who calls and a commitment that is made real in the response, through an adequate and continuous formation, a total self-giving to God and to the Brothers, travelling each day the path of sanctification.

The purpose of formation, in its dynamic perspective, is to be enlightened and guided by the Spirit to make real and personal the gift of FSF vocation. The Brother called by God responds personally and lives

the vocation as an experience of faith, and commits himself to build up his personal identity answering, day by day, to the will of God, feeling the vocation as an experience of commitment. He lives also his vocation as an experience of identification with the Institute.

He matures in freedom, develops the resources of the nature and grace, responds to the aspirations of the Spirit. Responding to God who calls, he starts a new life that is performed in the service to others and finds the way of his full realization in Christ.

- Vocation = definition: 2.1.
- The vocation to life: 2.1.1.
- The vocation of Israel: 2.1.2.
- The Christian vocation: 2.1.3.
- The vocation to consecrated life: 2.1.4.
- The vocation of the FSF: 2.1.5.
- Sense and objectives of the pastoral of vocations: 2.2.; 2.3. – 2.8.3.
- Vocational maturation in the Postulancy: 3.4.3.
- Novitiate: to mature the response to one's vocation: 4.2.3.; 4.7.3.
- Scholasticate. Maturation of the vocation: 5.3.3.; 5.7.3.

ABBREVIATIONS OF THE DOCUMENTS CITED

DOCUMENTS OF THE VATICAN COUNCIL II:

- GS Pastoral Constitution “*Gaudium et Spes*”, on the Church in the Modern World, 1965.
- LG Dogmatic Constitution “*Lumen Gentium*”, on the Church, 1965.
- OT Decree “*Optatam Totius*”, on the Training of Priests, 1965.
- PC Decree “*Perfectae Caritatis*”, on Up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life, 1965.
- SC Constitution “*Sacrosanctum Concilium*”, on the Sacred Liturgy, 1965.

PONTIFICAL DOCUMENTS:

- ET Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelica Testificatio*”, of Pope Paul VI, on the Renewal of Religious Life, 1971.
- RD Apostolic Exhortation “*Redemptionis Donum*”, of Pope John Paul II, to men and women religious on their consecration in the light of the mystery of the redemption, 1984.
- VC Apostolic Exhortation “*Vita Consecrata*”, of Pope John Paul II, on the consecrated life and its misión in the Church and in the world, 1996.
- GE Apostolic Exhortation “*Gaudete et exsultate*”, of Pope Francis, on the call to holiness in today’s world, 2018.
- ChV Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “*Christus vivit*”, of Pope Francis, to young people and to the entire people of God, 2019.
- EG Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelii gaudium*”, of Pope Francis, on the proclamation of the Gospel in today’s world, 2013.

DOCUMENTS OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE:

- CIC *Code of Canon Law*, 1983.
- CDRL Document *Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life*, CRSI, 1980.
- DVPM *Development of Vocational Pastoral Ministry in the Particular Churches*, Congregation for Catholic Education and CIVCSVA, 1992.
- EE *Essential Elements* of the teaching of the Church on religious life, applied to institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate, CRSI, 1983.
- MR Instruction “*Mutuae Relationes*”, on the mutual relations between bishops and religious in the Church, Congregation for Bishops and CRSI, 1978.
- PI Instruction “*Potissimum Institutioni*”, on formation in religious institutes, CIVCSVA, 1990.
- RC Instruction “*Renovationis Causam*”, on the renewal of religious formation, CRSI, 1969.
- RHP Document *Religious and Human Promotion*, CRSI, 1980.
- FLC Document *Fraternal Life in Community*, CIVCSVA, 1994.
- CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992.
- IMRBC Document *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, CIVCSVA, 2015.

WRITINGS OF THE FOUNDER:

- Circ *Circulars to the Brothers of the Holy Family*.
- C *Constitutions and Rules of the Brothers of the Holy Family*, 1836.

- NG *New Guide of the Brothers of the Holy Family*, 1858.
GWAT *Guide, Way, Angel and Treasure: Brother Gabriel Taborin's Writings: A Selection of Texts*, Madurai, 2012.

DOCUMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE:

- C *Constitutions of the Brothers of the Holy Family*, 2009.
GD *General Directory of the Brothers of the Holy Family*, 2009.
RRP *Rite of Religious Profession proper to the Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family*, 1990.
IBHFT *The Institute of the Brothers of the Holy Family is Alive through Time*, Madurai, 2013.
SFS *The Links which Bring us Together in Jesus, Mary and Joseph: Sa-Fa Family Spirituality*, Madurai, 2011.
Life *Life of Rev. Brother Gabriel Taborin*. Brother Frederic, Madurai, 2019.
POS *Positio super virtutibus*, Rome, 1985.
CLR *The challenge of a lay religious in the 19th century: Brother Gabriel Taborin*, 1995.
EPI *Educational Project of the Institute*, 2011.

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