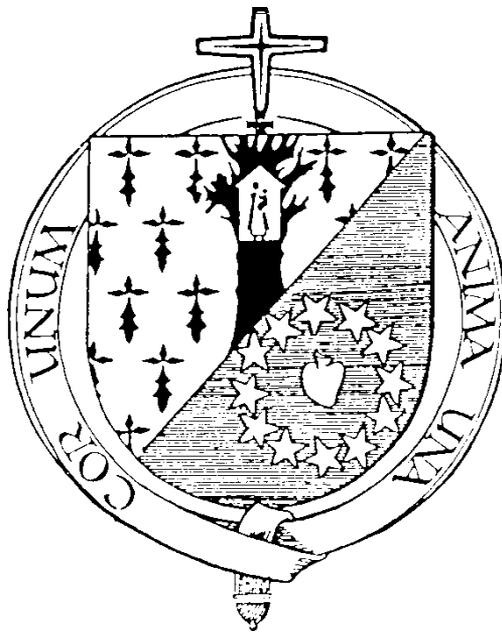


Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

# General Guidelines for Ongoing Formation



- Roma 1998 -



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# Foreword

As our Constitutions underscore “Ongoing formation is an integral part of our daily lives... Each one of us carries the primary responsibility for his own ongoing formation.” (*Const.* Art. 78). It is, therefore, a never ending task which nobody else can fulfill in our place. Why do we then need directives to determine something of such a personal nature? Do we not run the risk of imprisoning in lifeless words that which properly belongs to the dynamism of life?

In drafting the present document, the General Government wanted, first of all, to reiterate the importance the XIth General Chapter has given to Ongoing Formation in function of quality missionary service adapted to the realities of today. Recommendation #37 has insisted on the need to publish guidelines already envisioned in Art. 78.1 of the General Directory.

The first two chapters literally constitute a plea on behalf of Ongoing Formation, situating it in the context of the Church and the world of today. The following chapters describe systematically its different facets. They outline a course to be pursued filled with reference points to facilitate the evaluation of both personal efforts and the animation received from those in charge.

The text is the product of almost two years of close collaboration between the General Government and the Euntes Team, on the one hand, and the contributions of confreres in the field, on the other. A working document drafted in 1997 was, in fact, sent to the provinces and districts for their comment. The contributions received were studied and evaluated in view of formulating the final text. I would like to thank all those who have collaborated.

For some the document might give the impression of trying to break down an already open door. While for others, it will just be another text. What a pity! Just the same, I wish that the ***CICM Guidelines for Ongoing Formation*** would help us realize that the *corporate service* we have to render to mission re-

quires that we be expansive, spiritually robust, well-informed and competent. This implies that we have to set apart time for ourselves. This is not “lost time” or time “stolen from mission”. He who gets lost in activism risks getting lost completely and thus render poor service to himself and to mission.

Nova Iguaçu (Brazil), the 18th of October 1998,  
Mission Sunday.

Jacques Thomas, cism  
Superior General

## Chapter 1

# Ongoing Formation in a Rapidly Changing World

The letter of the General Government to all CICM members, *Some Reflections on CICM Ongoing Formation*, Rome, 1990, clearly states that ongoing formation is not a novelty in the Congregation. It existed from the very beginning! The document emphasizes that a lot is being done today. As a matter of fact, “we are alert to new situations in the world as well as to new needs in the Churches” (*Constitutions*, art. 3). In this first chapter we would like to reflect briefly on a few meaningful *new situations* in the world and on the way in which ongoing formation can help people face them. Everyday experience already suggests that each specific challenge calls for a particular kind of ongoing formation. The chapter, therefore, first examines the main challenges missionaries face in a rapidly changing world and then proposes a few fundamental insights into the nature of the ongoing formation the missionary needs in order to respond appropriately to them.

### A New Model of Society

Only a few decades ago, people imagined that they had almost absolute power over nature, and that they could exploit it without limit. Practically all changes were called ‘progress’, and most of us welcomed them enthusiastically. We were eager to participate in the transformation of the world. We often failed to question critically the popular belief in indefinite and ongoing progress. Like many of our contemporaries, we viewed history as one-directional. Today we no longer associate change with progress. Doubts have arisen concerning the true nature of many changes. As a matter of fact, we are witnessing the decline of all sorts of institutions that gave people identity. Churches, universities, enterprises, trade unions, traditional and new professions, various crafts, etc., offered people not only a job to do but also an identity. To be a missionary, a teacher, a manager, a union

leader, a lawyer or a farmer was to be someone: a person who belonged to an institution which defined appropriate conduct, and which shared wisdom, a history and a solidarity. This no longer holds true.

A new and simpler model of society is increasingly gaining ground. More and more we are becoming members of the global market: buying and selling, being bought and sold. The corrosive effect of this model is obvious. The institutions that gave people identity and a purpose in life are losing their authority and independence. They all must submit to market forces. In the West professional soccer teams exist less to play soccer than to make profit! This pattern of thought has a major impact on the daily life of people. The new model does not bring them together, it rather favors fragmentation and competition for scarce resources. More and more people feel that they are becoming slaves to the impersonal forces of the global market.

### **Socio-Economic Changes**

The rapid socio-economic changes we witness today are the result of the scientific and technological development which started two centuries ago in Europe. At the beginning only Europe was affected. Northern America and Japan followed soon. Today the whole world is concerned but this does not mean that all have access to the most sophisticated equipment the market can offer. Yet the negative effects can be observed even in the most remote places on earth. Economic production as well as mentalities are deeply affected. The new model alters the expectations of people, especially the young. In many countries people leave their village and search for a better life in the big cities where one can freely enjoy modern life. Unfortunately, most of them end up in slums where they struggle to survive.

There are, of course, also those who succeed to adapt themselves to the new situation. *Knowledge workers*<sup>1</sup> are without

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<sup>1</sup> A growing number of analysts use the term *knowledge worker* to stress the fact that today most highly skilled professionals are employees. The main difference between them and their less skilled fellow workers is that they personally *own* indispensable tools of production (specific knowledge). Organizations and enterprises increasingly

doubt very successful in taking advantage of rapid change. They are aware of the fact that one can no longer learn in a few years all one should know to do a job well. They also know that sooner or later they will lose their present job. Consequently, they cultivate the ability to acquire and to apply theoretical and analytical knowledge. Above all, they develop *a habit of continuous learning*. This allows them to offer their services to the one who makes the highest bid. They view their knowledge as a key resource which is very different from any of the traditional resources like labor, land, and capital. Knowledge is not tied to any country, it can be created everywhere, and it is, by definition, ever-changing. It makes itself obsolete within a short period of time. *Learning can therefore no longer stop at any age*. A performance oriented ongoing formation is essential for all *knowledge workers*. Specialized institutions offer a wide variety of programs, *knowledge workers* and the enterprises that employ them are prepared to spend large sums on ongoing formation.

*Knowledge workers* will never be a majority, yet it is very likely that they will be the trendsetters of tomorrow. Competition already plays a major role in society. On the one hand, it stimulates creativity and strongly motivates those who are able to participate in it. On the other hand, it excludes a vast number of people. As a matter of fact, changes take place at a pace which unsettles many of our contemporaries. The result is often a deeply felt frustration leading to the loss of fundamental values. It would be wrong to blame science and technology for this situation. One should rather point at the ruthless use of the new methods and techniques in order to acquire riches and power for oneself. Ignorance, laziness, and a lack of mutual agreement often lead to the same feeling of despair. Fortunately, more and more governments and non-governmental organizations are prepared to deal with these issues. They are setting up a wide variety of programs to help people cope with the new situation. This type of ongoing formation is therapeutic as well as performance oriented.

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depend on them because the sophisticated equipment they own is useless without the skill of the *knowledge workers*. Hence the growing interdependence between the *owners* of two complementary sets of tools of production.

## **Demographic Developments**

The rapid development of medical science increased life expectancy but it is also partly responsible for the demographic boom, especially in poorer countries. Consequently, we not only should learn how to deal with a new scientific and technological environment, but also need to learn how to live together in a rather crowded world. For some, the solution is quite simple: exclusion. Marginalize the people who are already afflicted by economic competition and prevent them from having more children. Especially the governments of rich countries advocate this solution. Their main concern is the growing number of economic refugees who try to enter their countries. The rich are naturally reluctant to share their wealth! Moreover, there are projects urging the poor to have less babies by all means. Poor countries are at times threatened with exclusion from all economic assistance if they do not promote these projects. One can indeed call this *a death-oriented manipulation*.

Others, among them many religious people, are convinced that we need to learn how to live in solidarity in a densely populated world. They resist the one-idea projects of the rich and powerful and search for alternatives. They wonder whether the new technology could not be used to produce enough food for all. This supposes new ways of distributing the wealth of the planet. The involvement of women, especially in poor countries, is essential. Their role is often exclusively linked to fecundity. They should be given the opportunity to assume more responsibilities in society. Hence the many formation programs which help women to acquire a better knowledge of their own body, their potentialities, useful skills, different opportunities, their future role in society, etc. These programs do not only contribute to the creation of better living conditions, but also lead to an effective and respectful family planning by the women and their husbands themselves. One could rightly call this *a life-oriented ongoing formation*.

## **Global Interdependence**

Another feature of our rapidly changing world is global interdependence. Major events are immediately communicated to vast numbers of human beings all over the world. One can never foresee how they will be received at the other end of the world.

Some create shock waves which provoke new events that in their turn influence large sections of the world population. Moreover, global communication networks allow individual citizens to select for themselves the information they judge relevant. Instant interactive communication is no longer the privilege of governments and multinationals. A new age of information has dawned. Information is no longer linear. It is transmitted simultaneously in all directions, thus becoming a new dynamic element in a world of process.

Nonetheless, and in spite of the rapid growth of global communication networks, parochialism is still very common in most parts of the world. Yet the new developments clearly show that a refusal to enlarge one's horizon leads inevitably to marginalization. Global interdependence already has a real impact on daily life and often unsettles individuals as well as institutions. People naturally fear complexity and try to keep things under control by withholding or controlling information. This is no longer possible. Moreover, attempts to hide information seriously undermine one's credibility. One should instead favor a dynamic process of interaction between partners. Management and leadership styles are equally affected by these developments. Leaders are now challenged to set up teams and to empower their members. Motivation is greatly enhanced if people really feel part of a common task. All this supposes a number of new skills and attitudes. Managers as well as employees follow ongoing formation programs which help them to enhance their communicative skills. These programs are not exclusively task oriented, they *also focus on genuine personal relationships*.

### **Crisis of Institutionalized Religion**

We already mentioned the crisis of the major institutions that gave people identity. Modernity broke down traditional organizations built on values like faithfulness and solidarity, and has promoted individualism, mobility and competition. Globalization is radicalizing this development. Hence the growing number of people who are searching for new identities and relationships of support and solidarity. Many believe that they can find what they are looking for in ethnicity and religion. However, this does not necessarily mean that they turn to the churches. In fact, they generally move away from institutional controls and dogmatic

certainties and turn to associative communities where they can experience the freedom to search and to choose. Sects often seem far more attractive than mainstream churches. A large number of them, however, will not find the appropriate answers to their questions in the sects. Disenchantment follows soon, and many find themselves at a loss, not knowing anymore whom to trust. Other institutionalized religions like Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are less affected by these developments. Yet, they, too, are struggling with the issues of modernity and globalization. The majority of their faithful seem to favor a prudent and critical openness towards modernity, but in some cases they have to face the fierce resistance of archaic fundamentalists who often associate with narrow minded nationalists.

Religious leaders are usually very prudent and most of them seem hesitant to take up the challenge. In spite of numerous interreligious encounters they fail to reconcile the pluralism of perspectives among themselves. It is equally difficult to come to terms with the cultural pluralism of the world. Of course, it is up to the different religious leaders to find out how they will deal with these issues. All we can do is make an effort to answer the challenge ourselves in the hope that others will do the same and that one day we may jointly take it up. We should first of all ask ourselves how we can witness to the Kingdom of God in this rapidly changing world. In order to do this we will have to learn to value positively the cultural and religious pluralism which is struggling to overcome the monochromatic perspectives of globalization. We will also have to accept the freedom of people even in the sphere of religion. Finally, we will have to respect their quest for associative, experiential communities moving beyond institutional structures. This enormous challenge calls for a particular type of ongoing formation.

### **Person-Oriented Ongoing Formation**

The above mentioned features of the rapidly changing world we live in call for a dynamic understanding of the human being. Humans are not static, they can never acquire a definitive formation which will enable them to do a job for the rest of their lives. Nor does a complete human formation exist which allows a person to lead a happy life in all circumstances. One should never forget that human beings are continuously changing. They are

born as small helpless babies who need to be taken care of. After a few years, babies become children and adolescents who need to be accompanied so that they may discover the surrounding world, thus becoming independent persons capable of relating to others. Young adults grow, they discover new aspects of life and come to terms with their own role in society. In the end they mature, somehow unexpectedly! And finally, they pass away. The identity of human beings and their activities are linked to these phases of life.

Human beings are to be viewed as living organisms which have to interact with their environment — in the first place with other human beings — in order to develop themselves. The more intense this interaction, the more the organism develops itself. It is this ongoing interaction with the surrounding environment which shapes the dynamic identity of a person. Consequently, *it is essential to optimize this interaction*. This is what ongoing formation is all about. It is founded on a balanced activity which respects the particular phase of life one is in, as well as his or her personal capacities and rhythm. This activity will never be perfectly adapted to the person. Hence the need to withdraw from time to time to take some rest, to reflect with others and to share experiences. In this way, wounds are healed and the ability to interact with the environment enhanced. This must continuously go on. Therefore, ongoing formation should be person-oriented. Moreover, each human being is responsible for his or her ongoing formation. One can never force another person to develop. Yet organizations can help their members and other interested people as well by setting up attractive formation programs. Emphases will differ according to needs and circumstances. However, exclusive emphasis on one aspect of life should be avoided.

## Chapter 2

# Missionary Ongoing Formation in the Contemporary Church

The new context in which we work and live calls for *a comprehensive and well-designed program of ongoing formation to sustain our initial formation*. In Chapter 1 we already said that ongoing formation cannot be viewed as a medley of isolated tasks. Sessions, workshops, lectures, and readings are important. Yet one should never lose sight of the fact that it is really an ongoing process of integrated growth into relationships. For us missionaries the relationship with God is essential. We are his messengers! We cannot be genuine missionaries if we neglect the relationship with the One who sends us. In this chapter we will present ongoing formation not simply as a matter of learning to do more things in order to better serve the mission of the church, but rather as a question of *opening ourselves ever more to the Spirit* who continuously invites us to transform ourselves so that we may be considered a blessing by the people to whom we are sent.

### **Growing Lack of Human and Cultural Support in Society**

A rapidly changing world demands that missionaries continue their study of “things divine and human” in order to “enter with greater advantage into dialogue with their contemporaries” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 19). John Paul II invites us “to be as open as possible to the light from on high from the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognize the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt and thus to respond adequately to human expectations” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 5).

In contemporary society we discern signs of hope which invite us to foster a closer collaboration with people of other faiths, convictions, and cultures: a deeper awareness of the dignity of the human person, a growing thirst for peace and justice, a more open search for truth, and a greater openness to religious values in

many parts of the world. Cooperation with others in a broad network often strengthens the motivation of the missionary. There are also, however, trends in contemporary society which are a cause for concern: overly personal subjectivity, materialism, hedonism. These factors contribute to an environment which is indifferent or even hostile to the missionary. Especially in affluent societies, missionaries find themselves lacking the human and cultural support they need and long for.

In many parts of the world society itself seems to have changed its attitude toward the missionary. In some countries he faces a climate of distrust. He is accused of working for foreign powers, of inciting revolt, of taking sides in conflicts. Elsewhere, scandals — pedophilia, sexual abuse, embezzlement, etc. — involving only a few missionaries lead to a serious questioning of the missionary's integrity. The media do not report these 'scandals' with a sense of sadness at human failure but rather with a kind of glee at having finally learned the 'terrible truth'. The attitude of society has shifted in many countries from grudging respect to sad skepticism. In the West, more and more people feel that the missionary has nothing to offer in any case. Their indifference is at times hard to bear.

### **The Need for a Considerable Spiritual and Intellectual Depth**

A number of developments in the church today also increase the pressure on missionaries. The impact of their decreasing number is one of them. Far more is being demanded of far fewer missionaries. This places great strain upon them. They need a considerable spiritual and intellectual depth to meet the challenges of their ministry today. They try to work together with the laity, and in most places this cooperation is a success. However, many missionaries — among them also younger ones — are ill equipped to work together with emancipated and critical lay persons. They often suffer from their criticism and do not know how to deal with it. Some find themselves saddened, dispirited and at times filled with a sense of malaise. It is as if all their efforts to enliven the faith of their people are in vain.

One notes at the same time a greater expectation placed upon missionaries. There is, first of all, the aforementioned call

for more effective collaboration with the laity in carrying out the mission of the church. Moreover, the people expect the missionary to be a courageous spiritual and moral leader. Especially in times of war or other major crises they look to the missionary for empowerment and guidance. If he speaks out against injustice, the laity feels encouraged and motivated. Refugees and displaced persons count on him, and the sick ask for healing. Here again, many Christians are ready to commit themselves in different forms of assistance if the missionary commits himself first. Indeed, much more is being demanded of the missionary today, both in the church and in society.

### **Rekindling the Gift of God That Is Within Us**

The context of both the contemporary world and the church demands of every missionary, regardless of his age, a greatly deepened *personal spirituality*, regular and ongoing *missiological and theological updating*, and the development of more extensive *missionary skills*. Hence the need for a well-developed, comprehensive and integrated program of ongoing formation which also has deeper theological roots. This is why both *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the *Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests* open with reference to Paul's words to Timothy: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you" (2 Tm 1:6).

Ongoing formation is first of all the work of God's Spirit in the life of each missionary, calling him to live the fullness of his union with Jesus Christ. It is founded upon the profound truth that every Christian is called to an ongoing rebirth into the fullness of life in Christ. *Ongoing formation is thus the very living out of the missionary vocation*: the initial 'yes' to Christ's call articulated on the day we took our first vows must be reaffirmed through the years in countless other responses, all of them rooted in and enlivened by our initial 'yes'. The Lord continues to call us and to send us. His saving plan is revealed in the history of our own life, that of the church and society. Ongoing formation helps us *discern and follow this constant call of God*.

Ongoing formation is a lifelong process. God's call does not stop at a certain age. He continues to transform our lives in a way we do not always understand. Like the first disciples we were

truly reborn in Christ, and yet at the very same time we are still in the process of being reborn. We know that the Lord saves us, yet we are struggling daily to live that salvation. Genuine ongoing formation therefore helps us to *develop a greater receptivity to God's Spirit*. Missionary formation is the work of a lifetime. From the very beginning of our missionary life we are involved in a life-giving and creative formation process which is essential both to us and to the church.

All professions require constant updating and one cannot demand less of a missionary. There is first of all a constant need for intellectual renewal which should not be underestimated. The long years of academic preparation are the beginning of a lifetime of learning. There is yet another, more basic, dimension we must never forget. Missionary ongoing formation always entails spiritual deepening as well. To become a missionary is not merely to enter into a new profession or to assume a new role. It is first of all to establish and to live a particular relationship with the Lord from whom all fruitfulness comes. This calls for a new way of life. *The ultimate foundation for ongoing formation is not so much the assumption of a job to be done properly but rather a newly acquired and lasting relationship*. The issue is who the missionary is, not merely what he does. Ongoing formation is thus an integral part of the very life of the missionary (cf. *Constitutions*, art. 78).

We may no longer view human beings as batteries which need recharging from time to time, but as living organisms in constant interaction with their environment. Ongoing formation thus fundamentally differs from 'recycling'. One can recycle goods, but human beings need to grow and mature. Missionary ongoing formation aims at growth in one's vocation. It helps the missionary to maintain and fine-tune his ability to interact with his environment and thus to understand better what God expects from him in a particular context.

### **The Right to Expect Assistance and the Duty to Make Use of It**

Our *Constitutions* clearly state that "formation is a lifelong process of integral growth and conversion, of putting on the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus Christ in our missionary commit-

ment” (art. 56). The *General Guidelines for Initial Formation* further elaborate this statement: “We need to become sensitive, attentive and responsive to God’s call and work. Throughout our lives, a dynamic interplay takes place between God’s guidance and our wholehearted response in creative fidelity” (n°2). This means that our formation does not end with ordination or graduation. “Initial formation should be closely connected with continuing formation, thereby creating a readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives” (*Vita Consecrata*, 69).

This clearly implies that all members of CICM can expect assistance in their ongoing formation. They also have the duty towards themselves, the Congregation, and the people to whom they are sent to make use of the various formation opportunities offered to them. John Paul II is quite explicit on this: “Consequently, it will be very important for every institute to provide as part of its *ratio institutionis* a precise and systematic description of its plan of continuing formation. The chief purpose of this plan is to provide all consecrated persons with a program which encompasses their whole life. Nobody is exempt from the obligation to grow humanly and as religious; likewise, no one can be overconfident as to live in self-sufficient isolation. At no stage of life can people feel so secure and committed that they do not need to give careful attention to ensuring perseverance in faithfulness; just as there is no age at which a person has completely achieved maturity” (*ibid.*).

Programs of ongoing formation are intended to assist the missionary in living his identity and vocation. Each program will have its own focus. Yet one should never lose sight of the basic dimensions of all missionary ongoing formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, missionary. The integration of these four dimensions in all formation programs will help the participants to mature, acquire the necessary knowledge to analyze situations, discern the signs of the Spirit, nourish themselves spiritually by their communion with Jesus Christ, develop a spirit of service and openness, especially towards people of other religions, convictions, and cultures.

## Chapter 3

# Dimensions of Ongoing Formation

1. “Ongoing Formation is an integral part of our daily lives. It demands a deepening of our spiritual life, an updating of our missionary attitudes, and regular study” (*Constitutions*, art. 78).
2. All CICM programs of ongoing formation, while retaining their own focus, need to include and harmonize four essential dimensions: the human, the spiritual, the intellectual, and the missionary.

### Human Dimension

3. Given the contemporary situation of the world and the church, greater attention must be given to the human dimension of ongoing formation. This dimension provides the basis and ground for all the other dimensions.
4. We must first of all come to know and continue to deepen our knowledge of ourselves as human beings with particular strengths and weaknesses. This means that we regularly take time for a healthy introspection. We must have the courage to look honestly at our own experience and to reflect on that experience in order to discern God’s ongoing call to bring the Good News wherever it is most needed.
5. Self-knowledge is not merely a matter internal to the individual but must be understood within the context of relationships which constitute the context of our life. All human life is basically a life of relationships.
6. In our sharing with other people we learn how to sharpen our human sensitivity so as to understand the needs of others,

perceive their unvoiced questions, and share their hopes and expectations.

7. Through our relationships with others we come to know ourselves even more deeply. We should foster sound friendships, love the people we are sent to, and allow ourselves to be loved by them. This means that we make an effort to constantly challenge any negative self-talk and to reshape the way we look at ourselves and others.
8. The more isolated we allow ourselves to become, the less we shall know ourselves. The absence of bonds of loving relationships with other people draws us away from the real love of God. We therefore need ongoing formation programs which challenge us to live our vocation with the keen awareness of our human strengths and weaknesses.
9. Learning more about ourselves and accepting ourselves as we are leads to self-confidence. Developing self-confidence is an ongoing process which is crucial to our life and ministry. The deep awareness of who we really are as redeemed creatures by Jesus Christ promotes maturity, happiness, health, and holiness. Without strong self-confidence one cannot serve others deeply. The quality of our self-confidence determines the level of our openness, acceptance, trust, and love.
10. Special attention should be given to programs which aim at the development of more effective ways of living and working together in intercultural communities and with the people to whom we are sent. The more effectively we live a mature life, the more credible will our witness be among people of other religions, convictions, and cultures.

### **Spiritual Dimension**

11. The Constitutions clearly state that “as religious missionaries we will be men of prayer” (art. 34) and then develop the essential traits of our spirituality (cf. art 34-47).
12. Mission is first of all God at work (cf. *Guidelines for Mission*, 8). Missionary spirituality can be defined as living a life of total commitment to mission with generous fidelity to the Spirit

of Jesus Christ. Our spirituality comes from mission and its goal is mission.

13. Sharing in the mission of Jesus Christ, we must become with him both messengers of the Good News to all and men who develop a close relationship with the Father. In this manner we shall discover the real meaning of prayer that binds us totally to the will of the Father.
14. Our spiritual life is intimately linked to our ministry (cf. *Constitutions*, art. 35). This implies that we should never become so immersed in what we do for others that we lose sight of the One who sent us. Hence the need for “longer periods of silence and personal prayer. Recollections and retreats are privileged moments which help us renew our evangelical spirit and to carry on our tasks with love and generosity” (*ibid.*, art. 46).
15. We need the help of others in order to discover the will of God in our life. This is more particularly true in a situation of rapid change. Hence the importance of spiritual direction for all of us. Sharing personal journeys, trials and tribulations, obstacles to a God-centered life with another person, is the substance of spiritual direction. Sharing helps us to understand better the events shaping our lives. In this manner we discover what God is saying about the direction he expects us to take.
16. Spiritual direction is quite demanding, we therefore need professionally qualified spiritual directors. However, confreres seeking spiritual direction look for more than an expert or a professional, they need a *companion* for their spiritual journey. Thus, being a member of a prayerful community is as important to the formation of a spiritual director as his professional training.
17. Mutual spiritual direction and companionship should be encouraged among confreres. It is a collaborative and rewarding experience for two mature persons to share spiritual journeys and personal struggles. Praying together and sharing spiritual reflections are usually also part of this process. Mutual spiritual direction can take the form of spiritual companion groups.

**Intellectual Dimension**

18. The study of the Scriptures, theology, missiology, etc., is no mere abstract academic enterprise. It must be integrated into the whole of ourselves and our lives as missionaries.
19. Study opens up the vast horizon of a truth no one can ever possess, thus helping us to go beyond the perspective of our own personal experiences and to free ourselves from prejudices. Christian 'doctrine' should never indoctrinate, but free us to continue with our journey.
20. Study requires the ability and the courage to listen to the arguments of people whose points of view differ from ours. It invites us to trust one another as partners in dialogue. Creativity should be encouraged, and new ideas be proposed with prudence and in the spirit of fraternal love. One cannot propose genuine renewal without understanding from within the fear that some among us experience when confronted with new ideas.
21. Study, especially of Sacred Scriptures, is indispensable for prophetic action. We study and meditate on the Scriptures in order to understand better God's will and not in order to prove that He is on our side. Slogans are easy to use and to abuse, but serious study leads to deeper forms of liberation.
22. Our study must also include human sciences, cultural and ethical debates, and social communication. Special attention should be given to issues of social justice, intercultural and interreligious communication, leadership skills, time management, listening and confrontation skills. The purpose of study is not so much to acquire more information but to insure the fruitful outcome of our missionary efforts. We should also always ask ourselves whether study helps us to become more convincing witnesses of the Kingdom.
23. Study should never become an instrument of domination or a reason to feel superior to others. Belonging to an international Congregation and generally serving a people other than our own, we highly value a vision of reality founded on

harmony and reciprocity. Respectful and constructive sharing with confreres and other persons of different cultures helps us to better understand the mystery of creation and the Creator himself.

24. The discipline of study transforms the human person. The asceticism and the perseverance which serious study always requires help us grow in our vocation. This growth is greatly enhanced if we are able to work together and to share insights and ideas with one another.
25. As with the other dimensions of ongoing formation, intellectual renewal must also continue throughout our life.
26. There is a need for ongoing formation programs that integrate spiritual renewal and intellectual development. Study could be viewed as a particular way of living according to the Spirit insofar it opens our hearts and minds to one another, strengthens relationships, and helps us to grow as confident witnesses of the Kingdom of God.

### **Missionary Dimension**

27. All the aspects of ongoing formation are given their fundamental direction by the inherently missionary focus of our ministry. Whatever maturity we attain humanly, spiritually, and intellectually, this must not simply bear fruit for ourselves, but also and always for the Kingdom.
28. As CICM missionaries we are called to develop the ability to establish good interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships. This presupposes that we are at ease with our own culture and are genuinely open to other cultures.
29. Missionary life demands that we encounter people of other faiths, convictions and cultures, and that we live in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized. These options call us to ongoing renewal both in our way of being present among the people and in our missionary methods.
30. To be a missionary is a great gift but it is also a tremendous responsibility. What was given to us is for others and not

simply for ourselves. The responsibility may at times so overwhelm us that we get trapped in the details of what we are supposed to know and do, forgetting why we do mission. Ongoing formation not only reminds us why we are doing it, but also for whom we are doing it. This awareness will help us to overcome activism.

31. Ongoing formation is very useful in helping us deepen the fundamental insight that God was already present among the people before we arrived. This allows us to appreciate positively the values people esteem and to view them as gifts from God. We do not have everything and we should not do everything. The Spirit was already at work long before we came and will still be present after we have gone.
32. If missionary vision and action go together, we shall grow in the appreciation of the various lay ministries, in our love for the local church that welcomed us, and in the awareness that we are participating in the mission the Lord entrusted to the whole church.
33. Ongoing formation programs should also address practical missionary issues: integration into a new culture, appropriate communication skills in a particular cultural context, development of mature relationships with women, elaboration of new missionary methods and planning, community building, counseling, etc.
34. It is not enough to be aware of the constant need for growth and development. We must also have the courage to make the necessary efforts to do something about it. Ongoing formation always demands an effort and will never be a painless process.

## Chapter 4

# Responsibilities and Structures

### Personal Responsibility

35. “Each one of us carries the primary responsibility for his own ongoing formation” (*Constitutions*, art. 78).
36. Responsibility means accountability to God, self, the Congregation, and the people we serve, for our spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical lives.
37. Responsibility for self is the path to creativity and health in missionary life. Assuming responsibility for our own ongoing formation is the first step toward improving our lives as missionaries.
38. Our missionary vocation demands that we work hard at undoing negative mental habits and at fostering a positive attitude which is an expression of a life in the Spirit.
39. Negative mental habits lead to irresponsibility which prevents us from knowing ourselves and from being effective in ministry. Avoiding responsibility by looking for scapegoats intensifies our anguish and frustrations, robs us of serenity, and can lead to serious illness.
40. Genuine responsibility for self brings internal peace and harmony as well as spiritual meaning and vitality to our missionary life and ministry. It can even shed new light on certain dimensions of our vocation that previously seemed meaningless.

### Local Church

41. Local churches generally set up programs of ongoing formation for all pastoral workers. These programs are often founded on the conviction that the renewal of the entire group

of pastoral workers is a necessary catalyst for the spiritual renewal of the whole church. It is our duty to actively participate in these programs.

42. Committed to our own personal renewal, we take part in these programs to enhance our role as animators of the spiritual renewal of the people whom we serve. These encounters also foster good relationships among us and with other pastoral workers. They are an expression of our solidarity with the local church.

### **Province and Region**

43. In his personal encounters with the confreres the Provincial Superior will regularly bring up the matter of ongoing formation and challenge each confrere to assume responsibility for his own ongoing formation.
44. Ongoing formation cannot be done haphazardly, it must follow a plan. Each confrere will consult with the Provincial Superior on the plan to be followed.
45. The Provincial Government “defines a clear Provincial policy of ongoing formation and establishes an effective service for its implementation” (*Constitutions*, art. 79).
46. An effective service supposes a clear policy which always mentions what the Province offers to the confreres and what it expects from them. The main objective is to deepen the missionary vision of the Province as a whole and to help each confrere live fully his missionary vocation in a particular context.
47. The PG is attentive to the needs of the confreres, proposes attractive and appropriate programs, and keeps them informed about interesting programs locally organized by others. The Provincial newsletter regularly mentions ongoing formation programs and reports testimonies of those who participated in ongoing formation activities.
48. In larger Provinces the PG can appoint a Director of Ongoing Formation. His mandate will be clearly defined and he will regularly report to the PG. The director of ongoing formation

is sensitive to what is happening in the field of missiology and missionary work, he also has some basic knowledge of psychology and counseling. Particularly sensitive to the needs of the confreres, he is a man of faith and true missionary spirit. He will be given the opportunity to prepare himself for this task and to keep himself up to date throughout his term of office.

49. The PG can establish a committee for ongoing formation to assist the PG or the Director of Ongoing Formation.
50. The PG sees to it that the Provincial policy on ongoing formation be respected in the conventions with dioceses and in individual contracts between a confrere and his employer.
51. Ongoing formation has its place in the Provincial budget. To cover the expenses, the PG uses first of all its own resources. If necessary, an appeal may be made to Congregational solidarity.
52. Provinces and Autonomous Districts include ongoing formation in their annual evaluation and report to the General Government (cf. *At the Service of the Kingdom*, 38).
53. Provinces of the same Region are encouraged to cooperate in the field of ongoing formation. In order to achieve effective coordination they can set up a team of animators to assist the different Provinces in their task to provide sufficient and appropriate opportunities of ongoing formation for the confreres.

### **General Government**

54. The General Government is “responsible for the general orientation and coordination of ongoing formation in the Institute” (*Constitutions*, art. 80). Its role is one of inspiration, support and encouragement.
55. The GG sees to it that these *General Guidelines for Ongoing Formation* issued on the recommendation of the 11th General Chapter (cf. *At the Service of the Kingdom*, 37) be implemented in all Provinces and Autonomous Districts.

56. The GG will pass on all relevant information about ongoing formation programs to the Provinces and AD's.
57. It is the responsibility of the GG to organize or at least sponsor some ongoing formation programs that deal with the identity of CICM and its missionary vision. These programs promote a greater awareness of our common missionary commitment (cf. *ibid.*, 5).
58. The GG encourages cooperation with non-CICM entities in ongoing formation initiatives.

### **Corporate Fidelity**

59. These levels of responsibility and their corresponding structures are complementary. They are an expression of our solidarity with one another in living our common CICM missionary vocation.
60. Corporate fidelity is not simply guaranteed by the fidelity of each individual member of the Congregation. The body is more than the sum total of all its parts. What we seek is the fidelity of CICM as such, because it is the whole Congregation which is called to be a sign of God's care for all who do not belong to his church. No individual member can, on his own, be such a sign.
61. An important aim of the whole process of ongoing formation is the development of creative and dynamic CICM communities. We make an effort to be rooted in Christ, to have good interpersonal relationships, to be inspired by a common vision of mission, to formulate appropriate and concrete objectives, and to respect the complementarity of talents and commitments. Together we discern what in our daily lives is most in conformity with our CICM mission and help one another to live it to the best of our abilities.

## Chapter 5

### Forms of Ongoing Formation

62. Ongoing formation normally takes place in everyday life without a prolonged absence from work. A weekly day-off to be spent on ongoing formation is highly recommended to all.
63. Ongoing formation starts from the reality of life and is oriented towards life. The following elements are important: a thorough analysis of the situation and of our personal experience, a prayerful reflection on this reality that helps us discern God's presence and his call to conversion, a clear commitment to answer his call.
64. There are different forms of ongoing formation. Each one will focus on one or more dimensions (cf. Chapter 3), yet this emphasis should never be exclusive.

#### Personal Reading

65. Personal reading can be done at any time, and should be considered one of the most important forms of ongoing formation.
66. Personal reading favors an attitude of intelligent receptiveness. The same holds true for attending conferences. What matters most is not the assimilation of information but the attitude of permanent listening founded on the conviction that we do not know everything.
67. Regular personal reading is rewarding, it may even become a cause of inner joy. It opens new perspectives and allows us to discover the deeper meaning of a number of events which seem to be meaningless at first sight.
68. A fruitful personal reading supposes a good selection. Hence the importance of a regularly updated Provincial library. Through the provincial newsletter confreres should be in-

formed about worthwhile books, periodicals and reviews. The *Euntes* Center publishes quarterly a selection of appropriate articles and reviews the most important books on mission theology and praxis. A good use of this instrument of personal study will prove very helpful.

### **Recollections and Retreats**

69. Recollections and retreats focus on the spiritual dimension. They allow us to retreat for a while from our busy apostolate in order to put together the scattered pieces of the puzzle of a life in the Spirit. Leaving behind a myriad of concrete concerns, we concentrate on what is essential: *our relationship with the Lord*.
70. The monthly recollection and the yearly retreat are opportunities to immerse ourselves more deeply in the experience of God. Prayer and reflection also help us to become more God-like in our daily lives. This implies careful and intelligent listening.
71. Recollections and retreats also favor in-depth sharing among the confreres. Missionary life is basically about faith-communication with believers of other religions, non-believers and religiously indifferent people. Our capacity to communicate with others will be enhanced by sharing among ourselves on a regular basis.

### **Short Courses and Sessions**

72. Courses and sessions usually emphasize one of the following dimensions: the human, the intellectual, the missionary. The main advantage of these forms of ongoing formation is that everything is done in a group setting which allows for mutual support and confrontation of ideas.
73. Information and analysis are essential to our missionary activity. They should be highly valued by all. The sharing of apostolic experiences and personal analyses of reality help us to enhance our ability to assess correctly the many complex situations we have to face in our ministry.

74. The PG will see to it that all confreres regularly attend relevant courses or sessions. The PG will from time to time organize short sessions on CICM matters, especially those which directly concern the missionary vision of CICM.

75. These sessions are also an opportunity for community building and strengthening relationships among confreres. There should be sufficient time for community prayer and socializing.

### **Sabbaticals**

76. Sabbaticals are longer periods of more intensive ongoing formation. There are short-term (2 to 4 months) and long-term (6 to 9 months) sabbaticals. They are part of the normal pattern of growth in our missionary vocation. One should prepare them well in advance in dialogue with the Provincial Superior and the Director of Ongoing Formation.

77. During a sabbatical we withdraw for a longer period from our work in order to reflect on and enhance our personal growth. Sabbaticals are always well organized programs which include community life. Mutual empathy and support are essential.

78. Sabbaticals are organized in such a way that they allow us to become effective in our ministry, more fulfilled, more knowledgeable, more prayerful, and better integrated into our particular context. The purpose is to help us become more radically committed CICM missionaries.

79. The organization of both short-term and long-term sabbaticals implies a holistic and coherent program aimed at the integral renewal of the participants. It must provide spiritual renewal and deepening of the faith, new biblical and missiological insights, good counseling which favors psychological maturity and health, and a more enlightened understanding of the world in which they live.

80. Spiritual direction is an integral part of a sabbatical which also includes an individually directed silent retreat. In this way we rediscover the value and the necessity of spiritual direction.

**Note.** *In Chapters 5 and 6, the numbers enclosed within borders are referred to the local superiors for their particular consideration.*

## Chapter 6

# Ongoing Formation at Different Stages of Life and in Particular Circumstances

81. Ongoing formation fosters a youthfulness of spirit throughout all the stages of life. It enables us to give new and fresh meaning to our tasks, to our way of being, serving, and loving.

### Entering the Ministry

82. Entering the ministry is an important stage of life characterized by the passage from a formally supervised situation to a life of full responsibility for one's own apostolate.
83. Young confreres entering the ministry must be supported and accompanied by a more experienced confrere to help them live to the full their missionary vocation.

84. The PG will regularly provide opportunities for young confreres to meet one another and share experiences. Short sessions can be very helpful.

### Mid-Life Transition

85. Mid-life transition is a long process of inner transformation and rebirth. It is a normal phase of growth with its own pains and joys. Most of us experience it as a time of anxiety, stress, emptiness, meaninglessness and malaise. Yet, it is at the same time a period to search for meaning and wholeness. Mid-life is the turning point to 'one thing only'. It is a time to let go and let God into the center of our being.
86. Many of us embark for mid-life completely unprepared. If we do not admit that one cannot live the afternoon of life accord-

ing to the program of life's morning, we inevitably enter into self-conflicts and play subtle games of rationalization and projection which often lead to a life of brokenness.

87. At this stage of life, ongoing formation will give priority to formative spirituality. It will help the middle-aged confreres to renew their original commitment and not to confuse the quality of their commitment with the results of their work. Mid-life transition will thus become a creative process of inner transformation heralding a new harmony of human and spiritual growth. Sabbaticals are particularly helpful at this stage of life.
88. The transformed mature person makes the gift of self to God with greater generosity and extends it to others with greater serenity and wisdom. This is genuine spiritual fatherhood.

### **Advanced Age**

89. The gradual withdrawal from activity can be a very formative experience. But it should be carefully prepared. Aging confreres should therefore from time to time consult with the Provincial Superior on their rhythm of activity. This sharing will also help them express their expectations regarding retirement.
90. Congregational retirement homes are always set up in such a way that they foster genuine community life characterized by mutual help and support. We are also called to minister to one another. Sharing of experiences may be very helpful especially for those who just retired from active life. It will certainly enrich our prayer life and enhance our sense of responsibility for one another.
91. The PG will see to it that retired confreres are never cut off from the rest of the Congregation. Regular visits of active confreres, appropriate readings, and conferences on the evolution of the theology of mission and missionary praxis, will help them to keep in touch with the life and work of the entire Congregation.

92. Advanced age is for many of us a time of suffering, *a real way of the cross*. Yet it is also a chance to be transformed by a paschal experience leading to a new way of living our missionary vocation that is no longer directly linked to a concrete apostolic activity.
93. This process of growth will allow us to await and prepare for *death as the supreme act of love and self-offering*. The process of formation which started many years ago will thus be brought to completion.

### **Changing Activity or Place of Activity**

94. Independently of the different stages of life, any period can present critical situations such as a change of activity, or of the place of activity. The departure from a country and a community we loved and served for many years is a real suffering for all of us. It also is a normal life crisis which presents opportunities for growth and deepening. This experience can call forth the best in the confreres affected if they can count on the support, encouragement, challenge and love of the confreres of the receiving Province. In some circumstances, a change of activity or of the place of activity may lead to a serious crisis of a personal nature. Confreres facing such a crisis will be appropriately accompanied, and be given the opportunity to ‘mourn’ for some time over their loss and to come to terms with it.

95. The *General Directory* clearly states that “the Provincial Superior ensures that a confrere who arrives in the Province for the first time or is moved from one cultural context to another, acquire an adequate knowledge of the language, the concrete situation of the country, the problems and options of the particular Church. The Provincial Superior also draws his attention to the necessity of spiritual direction” (art. 79.1).

### **Trials of Life**

96. Other critical situations can result from personal factors such as physical or mental illness, spiritual aridity, death of

beloved persons, difficulties in interpersonal relations, addiction, sexual disorders, crises of faith or identity, or feelings of uselessness. At such times the sensitive attention of the Provincial Superior is most essential.

97. The Provincial Superior will be particularly attentive to signs of burn-out, stress, or other problems. During his encounters with the confreres concerned he will bring up these matters and discern with them the action to be taken. All of us can be helpful by also being attentive to these symptoms and by communicating the problem as early as possible to the Superior concerned.

98. All confreres undergoing this kind of trials should receive the required treatment. In some circumstances a direct intervention by the Provincial Superior – sending a confrere even against his will for the needed therapy – is necessary. This is always the case when third parties are involved or may become involved, e.g., the sexual abuse of minors.

99. All of us can help the confreres undergoing these trials by creating an environment of openness and concern. In some Provinces it will be possible to provide a place of support for them.

100. It is important that we perceive these trials not only as problems causing hardship but also as occasions for conversion. Treatment and the caring presence of a confrere can lead to a rediscovery of the covenant with God. The person undergoing difficulties will then view them as a way of following Christ crucified. This will enable him to face his own weakness, knowing that God is present in the midst of trials. The experience of being lost may lead to a profound experience of being saved.

## Appendix

# Evaluation Grid

If we are to achieve our goal — the continuing growth of all confreres in their missionary vocation — these ***General Guidelines for Ongoing Formation*** must be implemented in every Province and Autonomous District. This presupposes a regular evaluation. Hence, this grid which has been conceived as an *instrument* to help the PG's and ADG's assess their responsibility for the ongoing formation of confreres.

### 1. Provincial ongoing formation policy

- Do we have a clear policy? What do we offer the confreres and what do we expect from them? Does our policy implement the *General Guidelines for Ongoing Formation*? What is still lacking?
- Do we have a good provincial library? Do we regularly update it through the acquisition of new books and the regular renewal of subscriptions to relevant reviews? Do the confreres consult the library? How can we encourage them?
- Do we take care that all confreres receive *Euntes Studies* and *Digest*? What do we do to encourage them to make good use of these Congregational instruments of ongoing formation?
- Do we regularly inform the confreres about interesting opportunities for ongoing formation (readings, sessions, retreats, sabbaticals, etc.)? Do we ourselves take initiatives? In which fields?
- Do the confreres willingly participate in ongoing formation activities? Which ones are successful? Why? Which ones are usually met with indifference? Why?
- Are we satisfied with the present set-up? Which aspects should be improved?

### 2. Spiritual direction

- How do the confreres think about spiritual direction? Is it a regular practice? Is there a need to change the attitude of

the confreres towards spiritual direction? How can this be done?

- Do we have a sufficient number of competent spiritual directors? Is there a need to send some confreres for further formation in this field?

### **3. Trials of life**

- Do we have the possibility to accompany the confreres who undergo trials (scrupulosity, pedophilia, alcoholism, emotional depression, womanizing, uncontrolled anger, problems of integration, burn-out, etc.) which unsettle them? Concretely how do we deal with these issues? What are the results? What should be improved?
- How do the other confreres react to their brothers who undergo this kind of trials? Are they able to detect symptoms of serious problems? Or do they try to ignore the problem and escape responsibility? Is there an atmosphere of honest dialogue leading to community support and help? What can be done to improve the situation?

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