

COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONS

REPORT TO XV GENERAL CENACLE

The present report has been checked by the vocational promoters and the Directors of the programs of the Committee for the development of Vocations of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity.

Overview of Our Formation Project

In the last four years we have seen an important transition, not only at the level of the VDC but also in the Congregation itself. The Congregation takes on more decisively its international and multicultural identity. This is observable in missionaries who go to missions outside their country of origin. We can say that we can now feel that our programs are not tentative experiments trying out things to see whether they will function or not. The programs have acquired a maturity that now enables them to reach the next level in their development.

A constant element has been the emphasis in our charism. It is not a question of a "general" formation, but a formation specifically delineated in the manner of the Missionary Servants. We want to form Missionary Servants. We keep insisting over and over again that we must educate ourselves and become identified with the religious life we want to live in two ways: as Missionary Brothers and as Priests. From this desire flow our efforts to make our formation houses, community houses where men are developed who are capable of responding to our permanent interest in a formation that prepares future religious for a missionary life in the world and the Church as they are today.

Our challenge has been, not only to identify ourselves as religious, but as religious in a missionary family. We are members of the Missionary Cenacle Family. This has driven us to seek clarity in our family relationship. We do not desire a unity which is uniformity, rather desire a unity which is communion in the same spirit in the service of the People of God.

Another great challenge has been the consolidation of our charism. We have tried to give a focus to our specific charism: to be makers of apostles. The role of the layman in the Church has been the focus of formation these last few years. Little by little we understand ourselves as apostles forming other apostles in the providence of daily life. The constant struggle is to respond to the constant invitation of the Holy Spirit who calls us to come out of ourselves to go and meet others.

How have we responded to these challenges?

We have responded to these challenges in various ways. We have done it in our decision to better communication between the formation programs, as well as by applying clear guidelines that help unify the formation criteria. We have tried to find academic programs that respond to our identity as religious. When unable to find such programs, we developed "*a curriculum for formation*" in which the five areas of formation are integrated: spirituality, community, apostolate, human development and academic development. Joined to that a Program for Special Skills which looks to train the confreres with specific emphasis on our charism.

We have insisted in a formation program with greater integration that avoids an excessive dependence on the personality of the functionary in charge, whoever he is, and a constant openness towards creativity. We have tried to include our Sisters in the vocational activities in México. Lay people have an important presence in some of our programs. In other programs there are also lay people that accompany the direct or indirect formation. We are glad to see that the Valley Missionary Program offers our confreres a mission year which enables them to train lay leaders.

Many challenges persist. Among them is the question of how to enthuse the rest of the congregation in promoting and keeping vocations, how to harvest the gifts that we receive from the new members, especially those arising from their culture and nationality, how to better prepare and support the program directors in their being and doing. There are some challenges that have to do with the very structure of the organization: the relationship between the Director of the VDC and the General Custodian and the Council has to be revised. The economic situation of the congregation also needs to be reviewed and how its resources are used in the formation programs. Included here is the participation of the Communications and MPO offices. Moreover it would be helpful to consider that the formation programs are a missionary activity, they are missions. The idea that being a director or a program is something that is done sacrificing one's mission is to be avoided. Actually, program directors ought to be pastors who accompany the confreres in the productiveness of their vocation.

Actions taken during the past four years:

- a. The post novitiate was transferred from México to Colombia
- b. A house of formation for pre-novitiate was opened in Stirling, N.J., USA
- c. Transition of the Director and Assistant Director to a representative of the General Council was effected
- d. In the U.S. transition was effected from a lay vocational Director to an S.T.
- e. Eleven confreres were promoted to first vows
- f. Five confreres were accepted for perpetual vows
- g. Five confreres were promoted to Holy Orders

h. Vocational promotion in Haiti will continue and with that in mind a committee was created to look into the possibility of a mission on the border with the Dominican Republic to serve as a bridge for young men from Haiti and the Dominican Republic to go to the pre-novitiate in Costa Rica.

i. No interruption in the efforts to develop a formation curriculum. Two documents have now been approved by the General Council (Community - Spirituality) which are part of the curriculum. Work is being done to finish this project. Once it is finished and approved it should be revised and actualized together with the formation manual now in use.

j. The Program for Special Skills was started in the post-novitiate program in Colombia and the U.S. The idea is to insure the matter of the charism in which there is no academic formation in the universities.

Vocational promotion and formation

At the present time we have 9 STs serving in vocational promotion and formation. We have 35 students: 13 are partially in the post-novitiate program, 22 partly in pre-novitiate program, 3 are in our 2014-15 novitiate class.

a. *Ministry of vocational promotion:* At the present time we have 3 vocational promoters: Gerardo Ramírez, S.T. who invites young men from México and more recently from Central America. Diovany Ramos, S.T. who invites young men from Panamá, Colombia and Haiti. Allen Daniel Rodríguez, S.T. who invites young men from the U.S., Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic

b. *Ministry of formation:* at the present time we have four formation programs

- *Pre-novitiate in Costa Rica* where Edgar Solano Bruno, S.T. is Director. With Edgar there are also César Muñoz, S.T. and Marta Vega from the MCA. At the present time the pre-novices attend classes at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the Theological University of Central America

- *Pre-Novitiate in Riverside, California, USA:* This program is directed by Francisco Gómez, S.T., two priests are in residence there: Nick Barille who serves in the jail ministry and Allen Rodríguez, vocational promoter in the U.S. The students at the house attend classes at Riverside Community College.

- *Novitiate in Huitzila, Hidalgo, Mexico:* Raymond Riding, S.T. is the Master of novices. Jesús Ramírez, Francisco Núñez and Pedro Escalante reside there.

- *Post-novitiate, USA:* At the present time Luis de la Cuadra is the Director of the program located in St. Joseph's Shrine, Stirling, N.J. Several confreres doing apostolic work in the Sanctuary also live there. The students attend classes at the Immaculate

Conception School of Theology which uses the facilities of Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J.

Post-Novitiate - Colombia: Gilberto Rodríguez, S.T. is the present Director of the program. Raúl Mejía, S.T. is also involved and also studies social work at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana. St. Joseph's Cenacle is the center of operations for the vocational promoter for Colombia, Panama and Haiti. The confreres in this program attend classes at the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Challenges:

- To achieve better collaboration with the Sisters, members of the MCA and us, STs, so as to consolidate efforts in formation and promotion that can help us to identify ourselves as a family.

- Stability in houses of formation. We should make the bond and dialogue among those in formation possible so that we can become rooted in our spirituality and charism.

- Keep insisting that our formation programs be spaces for integral growth of the confreres so that they become leaders and will be able to train leaders. That our houses of formation really become spaces where confreres and lay people prepare for mission. Our houses of formation ought to be places where confreres and lay people are made ready to be empowered to be apostles forming other apostles responding to the need of preserving of the faith in today's Church.

- It is important to continue strengthening the formation of our brothers in a sense of belonging in the congregation. As religious we are not "islands". We are constantly in a relational coexistence which supports us in our vocation. To believe that we can go it alone is a diabolical temptation (Pope Francis).

- Encourage among ST members the desire to feel responsible for promoting vocations in daily life. That each member of the congregation become a promoter of religious life lived within our charism.

Proposal:

Formation teams: That each house have a Director and Associate Director for the apostolate and spiritual life in such a way that they both accompany the candidate as to his apostolate and spiritual life, so that he can identify with our apostolate and charism. The Associate Director should accompany those candidates that want to live their religious life as Missionary Brothers. If we understand formation as the key for the renewal of the congregation, we need to have a structure that helps the candidates to identify as members of the Missionary Servants, including an MSBT Sister or a lay

person not necessarily from the MCA to accompany the formation processes in the houses of formation. At the present time we have psychologists who personally tend to the candidates. However, the idea that a lay person can directly influence the apostolic and spiritual life is of great importance to the STs.