



Central Secretariat for Formation
– OCSO –
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Newsletter 31

*To the Superiors,
to the OCSO Regional Secretaries
and to the brothers and sisters
interested in formation.*

REMILA

S. María José

Course for formators:

Formation in monastic values for today's youth.

Led by P. Armand Veilleux

May 4-11, 2022 – Monastery of Nuestra Señora de Curutarán, Jacona, Mexico.

This course had been postponed due to the covid 19 pandemic, in order to be able to do it in person. In our Region, due to the great distances that separate the monasteries, not only the content of the conferences given is valued, but also the exchange and fraternal sharing between the formators, with the speaker and with the community that hosts.

On this occasion, due to the fact that for different reasons several of the participating Sisters and Brothers could not travel, the possibility of virtual participation was opened through the Zoom platform. Thus, the event had 11 Brothers/ Sisters present (from Azul, Boa Vista, El Encuentro, Hinojo, Jacona, Miraflores and Quilvo) and 9 Brothers/ Sisters in connection (from Andes, El Rosal, Esmeraldas, Humocaro and Jarabacoa).

Dom Armand inscribed this meeting in the framework of synodality that the Church lives, as a walk together listening to what the socio-cultural changes and the teaching of Pope Francis are telling us. His conferences open horizons for reflection, understanding and discernment at this particular juncture in history.

The schedule and the dynamics of those days were intense, with two daily conferences followed by a group reflection and a sharing in plenary. At the end of each day there was a moment to share about our ReMiLa communities together with the Jacona Brothers.

The set of conferences gives us an overview of the monastic tradition, from its birth in the first Christian generations to the present, highlighting the Christian values that guide this tradition in each era. Their development made us more aware that “everything is connected”: the lessons of history, our personal and community experience, the call to conversion launched by Pope Francis and the challenges of today's world.

These have been the topics exposed:

- Christian monasticism as a radical response to the *sequela Christi*¹.
- Monastic formation as progressive restoration of the image of God in the monk.

¹ Cf. CSQ 45 (2010) 13-25.

- Discernment as a specific contribution of the contemplative life at the service of the whole Church.
- Renunciation as an experience of total loss and supreme freedom.
- Conversion as a path of gradual transformation.
- Temptation as a threshold of new growth.
- Spiritual fatherhood/motherhood in monasticism.
- Obedience as free consent to the divine will.
- *Lectio Divina* as a school of continuous prayer.
- The spirituality of work in monastic life.
- The primitive Church of Alexandria as a paradigm of discernment and inculturation of the Gospel.
- The coenobitic character of the foundation of Cîteaux.
- The reception of the Second Vatican Council in our Order.
- Christ shows us the way to eternal life².
- The social and ecclesial context at the time of the foundation of Cîteaux.
- The challenge that *Fratelli Tutti* raises the current monasticism³.
- The message of the monks of Tibhirine as authentic witnesses of the Gospel.

Some aspects that were highlighted in the presentation of the topics are the following:

- “Monk” is one who –overcoming the disintegration and fragmentation of interior and exterior life– unifies himself in a single love, accepting all the deaths necessary to achieve purity of heart and the simplicity of being what one is in front of God.
- Each of the elements that make up monastic life has its ultimate and essential root in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, and from him they receive their transforming power.
- Cultivate a permanent attitude of listening and discernment (which entails renunciation and choice) in order to gradually die to false identifications and find one’s true personal identity. Discernment must be both a personal and community instance.
- Our monastic tradition has a clearly coenobitic character, which must illuminate the various elements that make up our lives. In particular, the importance of the community for the experience of responsible obedience was pointed out; the common vision in the transmission of the charism and in formation; community life as a place of truth, authenticity, discernment and healing; the role of the abbot in establishing a monastic culture within the community.
- Living in communion with the faithful People of God, in an attitude of listening, will allow today’s monasticism to discern the cultural changes that affect our society and respond from the Gospel to its deepest hopes.

The exchange of groups and plenaries was lowering the theme of the conferences to the concrete situations of initial formation. Among the shared we can point out:

- ❖ The average age of the candidates who arrive today at our monasteries (in most communities) is 40 years old, which entails particular difficulties in integration and in full personal dedication.
- ❖ Our monastic life exerts attraction and rejection at the same time. It is expected to find in the monastery customs of life different from those that are lived in the world but, on the other hand, it is feared for the challenge that means abandoning self-referentiality, hyper-communication, the immediacy of worldliness, competitiveness, self-sufficiency...

² Cf. CSQ, 45 (2010) 25-33.

³ Cf. <https://www.aimintl.org/en/159-en/bulletin>

- ❖ Another common reality in our countries are the groups of Tridentine spirituality that attract many young people. Some of them knock on our doors in search of austerity and medievalism, but they soon realize that our monastic experience is clearly post-conciliar and they leave.
- ❖ Faced with the difficulty that the brothers in formation have in living obedience (which they see as humiliation, servility and submission), there was talk of a “catechumenate” to introduce them, with patience and understanding, to the spiritual and mystical value of obedience.
- ❖ Other difficulties reveal their inner wounds and the world of feelings and emotions that they do not know how to handle. The importance of integrating the past was mentioned (integrating is not analyzing). Accept that they are wounds and that they can heal in the context of healthy relationships. Teach them to link their difficulties, their experiences, their fears in their relationship with God. The experience itself is the space to find God.

All the participants have expressed their recognition and appreciation for the content of the conferences, the value of testimony and experience, and the tireless vitality of Dom Armand. Likewise, great gratitude was expressed to the community of Jacona for their generous welcome and their fraternity shown at all times. As a “golden brooch” of this meeting we have had the pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe on May 12. Moment of great significance, with the Eucharistic concelebration of our priests and the meeting with our Patron Mother of America.

RAFMA

Towards the integration of human sexuality in the project of religious life.

Led by **Father Jorge sac.**

May 23-27, 2022.

P. Justin

The session took place in the **diocese of Goma**, in the house of the **Sisters of Saint Vincent of Paul**. 35 people from 4 communities participated: 4 young professed from the Bernardine sisters accompanied by their Mistress and Prioress; **4 young professed and 3 Trappist novices, accompanied by their master**; Carmelite sisters with their Mistress and Sisters of Saint Vincent of Paul, with their Mistress.

The preacher recognized that dealing with this issue is not easy, because it is a process that accompanies us until the last breath. This process must be based on knowledge. The participants appreciated the pertinence of the subject which remains topical and thanked the preacher for the frankness and humor he showed in addressing a “taboo” topic in religious life. The participants agree to immerse themselves in it and integrate their personal sexuality as best as possible!

Thirteen points formed the framework of the session, which are explained in detail in the **attached file** (Affectivity):

- I. Importance of knowledge of human sexuality
- II. Negative ways of living sexuality
- III. Misconceptions about sexuality
- IV. Sexuality an integral part of the person
- V. Integration, relationship between the sexed body and our feelings
- VI. The functions of human sexuality
- VII. Instinct, drive, fantasies, temptation, fall and dreams

VII. Men and women

IX. The stages of development, the erogenous zones of the body

1st from 0-1 year old -oral- / 2nd from 1-3 years old -anal- / 3rd (-genital- opening to the other-Oedipus complex) / 4th from 6-12 years old -latency- / 5th from 12-18 years old - adolescence-

X. Sexual abuse

Definition. Types of abuse. The abuser's strategy. Why is it so difficult to report? What harm does abuse cause?

XI. Chastity, continence, virginity

XII. Celibacy

XIII. Friends in consecrated life



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Novice Master Course

*The cloister and the longing of the human heart - Start in the Cistercian monastic life
June 11-17, 2022 - Viaceli Cistercian Abbey, Cobreces, Spain.*

Using the image of the path, **the first section** consisted of *listening to those in formation speak about Formation: Ismael* from Cardeña and **Ana Isabel** from San Bernardo from Burgos (novices), **Yurany** from Benavente (temporarily professed) and **Tescelino** from San Isidro (recently solemnly professed). Their testimonies have impacted and edified due to their simplicity, openness, expressiveness and depth. At the end of his speech, as a gesture of gratitude for their participation, the Secretary for Formation, **Carlos M^a** handed them the little book by José Tolentino Mendonça, *Little Theology of Slowness*.

In the afternoon, the challenges made by the young people were shared in groups, recording what they had asked the Formators. Here are some notes:

- ✓ They insist that the day be *balanced*.
- ✓ Make the formation *personalized*.
- ✓ That the *accompaniment* be the main key of the formative process.
- ✓ Give training on *Lectio*, prayer, community life, singing, music, reading in public... so that *the Beauty of the Treasure* that liturgical prayer supposes as an essential space of encounter with God is cared for.
- ✓ Prevent *activism* at all costs.
- ✓ That the master be, before any other task, *a teacher*, and thus favor the *opening of the heart* of the one in formation.

The invited trainees have remained in the background throughout the course as the main speakers. They are often quoted.

The **second section** of the journey consisted of three intense days led by **Fr. Carlos Gutiérrez Cuartango**, from Sobrado, with the theme: *Contemplatives in relationships: a formative itinerary*. In the mornings he was listened to, with freedom to interrupt with questions and clarifications. In the afternoons, there was dialogue in groups and plenary. Some of the most outstanding things that the participants stopped at:

- We are made for the encounter. We are to the extent that we relate to each other. There we know ourselves.
- Invited to be “open-eyed mystics”, mystagogues, capable of drilling into reality and seeing God in everything and everyone. Very anchored in God.
- Confident in his Love, like a child, we can live like adults. Let us learn that trust of Jesus in his relationship with the Father.
- Let us aim at perfection, which is mercy.
- Formation is the common thread that allows us to order love, everything that is in us.
- We are all a gold coin, but muddy, or that falcon that needed to cut the branch that prevented it from flying. Only God knows our truth. The true sage is one who venerates the presence of God in everything.
- Everything, including personal and community limits, are a source of grace and possibility for formation.
- Dare to love. Being children in the school of charity where Jesus is the teacher who heals our wounded memory and makes us capable of creating communion. What is the goal? It is already walking together, taking care of each other.

The **third section** of the journey was with the Formators of the Internovitiate: **María Fernanda** (Benavente) and **Paco** (Huerta). Some of his wise words:

- As Formators we have something sacred in our hands: life, which asks us to help it grow.
- Every person is worthy of our dedication. Whether she stays or not, that she felt loved and understood.
- The Internovitiate is a Common Project. From there, an attempt is made to respond to the lack of formation, especially in the most precarious communities.
- Joining forces, we all win.

Some of your questions that have shaken us: In our communities, do we want vocations? What do we want them for? Who is the true trainer of our candidates?

And we received some of their responses that commit us all:

- The community is the true shaper.
- The companion is the one who knows how to conjugate these four verbs: welcome / understand / confront / apply to life.
- What to do with the subject of the Media (mobile, internet, networks...)? NOT ban, YES hold accountable.

A **fourth section** of the path of the course opens after the very rich exchange/dialogue with the two speakers. The afternoon was a formative excursion, visiting two places:

1. **The hostel** called “Grandfather Peuto’s cabin”, founded and animated by the priest **Ernesto**. It is a whole catechesis of welcome (migrants, pilgrims...) of ecumenism, of gratuitousness... An example of a living gospel!
2. **The Trinitarian Sisters of Suesa**: their simple and prayerful liturgy, their welcome, the walk, the snack and lively conversation... and their presence in Viaceli to share their experience of meeting people, especially young people, which is based on:

- The awareness that we are all inhabited by God. The sacredness of every person.
- God, who inhabits us, needs us to give him the opportunity to manifest himself to us. It's what they try to do with people.
- They strongly feel a call/certainty that drives them in everything they offer: *"People have an enormous thirst for God and we have Water. Let's not keep it to ourselves!"*

The **Benedictine Brothers of Silos** had illuminated the first part of this section with their specific Vocational Offer Project. **Father Rufino** and **Fray Ángel** share their experience in initial formation with great simplicity. They underline the importance of the first stage, which must be taken care of: clarify the meaning of everything we do in the monastery, give them the why and what for of what they see; show them closeness, a lot of patience, maintain contact with those who march... These Benedictines encourage us to make ourselves present in the Media, not to miss an opportunity to present the monastic charism, not to sit idly by. They also show the material they use. They explain to us what the "Monastic Experience" week that they offer consists of and the content of www.sermonje.eu (their website).

The **fifth section** of the road is in charge of **Brother Rafa** from Sobrado, President of the Commission for the Transmission of the Charism and Vocation Ministry, which they have called CCV (Charism Vocation Commission). He exposes the new project, which is based on the attempts of the previous Team and looks ahead. It invites to welcome in the communities the initiatives that are emerging. A martyr text of the Statute has been prepared: Nature, Purpose and Function of this Commission.

The **meeting ends** with the presentation of the synthesis of the same and the evaluation that each of the participants is sharing, on the content, development and personal experience, with expressions of gratitude for the richness of everything lived. Although it sounds in the background –as a complaint and with perplexity– the reduced participation, having been few has fostered openness and trust. There has been a lack of having had a meeting with the community.

As a climax, possible topics, speakers, place, duration and date for the next meeting 2024 have been sought. The topic is marked as *Heal from within. Heal for the relationship.*