

Central Secretariat for Formation – OCSO –
January 2023

Newsletter 33

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

CNE

Sr. Béatrice (Laval)

Session for Formators of the Cistercian Family

*Lichtenthal Abbey (O. Cist. Germany)
October 3 to 10, 2022*



We experienced our 11th training bringing together the German-French-speaking Cistercian Family after 4 years of stopping, due to the covid. And it was a great joy to find ourselves, in the number of 22 participants, coming from the Cistercian Order, the Bernardines of Oudenaarde and the OCSO. We reflected on the theme of the vows: **«Formation on the vows, impact for a more fraternal life in following Christ»**. Three speakers animated this session, allowing us to deepen this question which is so important for formators who take care to prepare brothers and sisters to integrate the community.

Our speakers were **Mrs Marianne Schlosser** (professor of spiritual theology at the University of Vienna - Austria), **Sr Marie-Bernadette Steinmetz** (psychologist in Germany) and Pastor **Pierre-Yves Brandt** (Protestant theologian and psychologist of religions at the University of Lausanne – Switzerland, well known to many French-speaking monasteries).

Marianne Schlosser resituated her remarks in the monastic fact from the origins (Cassian, the Fathers of the desert, Benedict), then she gave a look at the monastic vows before wondering about the link between the perfection to which the person and community life. I will retain a sentence from his conference, before discovering the full text:

«Formation in view of the vows does not mean that the person has to become a perfectly fitting piece of mosaic. Although it is primarily aimed at forming the individual person, it necessarily follows that relationships with others are transformed».

After the spiritual component, Sr. Marie-Bernadette Steinmetz continued with the psychological component. Accustomed to working together, these two speakers articulated their

point for unity. Sr Marie-Bernadette invited us to be “good listeners” who listen to the needs of the person (needs to express their feelings, closeness, to see their self-esteem grow) before giving us tools to communicate “truth in love”; then she ended her lectures with a training on the limits that a right relationship requires. A quote from sr. Marie-Bernadette who could summarize her contribution:

«The objective of your formation could be described as that of leading the sisters/brothers entrusted to you, aware of their unique dignity, to a self-knowledge which enables them to practice fraternity in a responsible, generous and disinterested way».

As for our last speaker, **Pierre-Yves Brandt**, he was first of all interested in the question of the meaning of commitment through vows, before looking at each of the 3 monastic vows in connection with fraternal life, its challenges and challenges for the novice, the stakes of the training, finishing each part with a look at the obstacles and the risks of abuse. Finally, his last conference emphasized the posture of the master of novices favoring the transmission of fraternal life. I would remember this summary:

«Commitment is the 'yes', a human word that opens the door to the Word. Commitment marks a passage in a process of incarnation. Vows are an act of love».



The texts of the presentations can be found in attached files, in French.

The human vocation. Daring to live one's humanity in following Christ

Session from 14 to 18 November 2022

Four novices followed a session with other young people from 5 congregations of the internoviciate in the diocese of Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo, at the Pallottine Formation Center directed by **Father Georges**. We thank him, as well as the formators and all the communities who contributed to the realization of this session. There were 12 Pallottine brothers, 12 Carmelite MT sisters, 9 Holy Family sisters, 5 Cistercian brothers, 4 Bernardine sisters and 3 Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa.

God speaks to us through our humanity, which is the basis of every vocation. Those who live their humanity badly cannot live the Christian and religious life. God speak to us through creation: we receive the treasure in vulnerability (Gen 2, 7; 2Cor 4, 7).

We respond by being aware that our life comes from God; that we are loved and made to love with a love that overflows towards the others. Nevertheless, when the person lives his humanity badly, he looks for his value outside. My value comes neither from religious life nor from the priesthood, nor from having.

The preacher developed this theme in 7 points (explained in a little more detail in the ***attached file***):

I. The role of the mother. Some deficiencies of maternal love:

- absorbing and devouring mother
- the controlling mother
- the narcissistic mother
- the impotent mother
- the overprotective mother
- the cruel mother

II. The role of the father, his mission.

- Some manifestations of lack of paternity
- What are the consequences, in adult life, of the lack of fatherhood?
- How to envision a healing path?
- Sibling Rivalry
- Expressions of lack of self-love

III. Self-perception.

- The signs of self-esteem, confidence and self-love
- How does Jesus help the sick to rebuild their self-esteem?

IV. Self-esteem criteria.

- Self-esteem and relationship with others
- Good self-esteem and relationships

V. Human attitudes unsuited to religious life.

VI. Human attitudes adapted to consecrated life.

- ✓ Attitudes towards oneself
- ✓ Attitudes towards the world and others
- ✓ Attitudes toward God

VII. The stages of human development.

William of Saint Thierry

The monastic theologian and teacher of enlightened faith experience

In 1993, **Juan María de la Torre**, a monk from Oseira, published *Guillermo de Saint Thierry: Un Formador de creyentes* (Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid). Throughout the last 30 years, this book has been an important aid in the formation of many Spanish-speaking monks. Juan María is part of the group of monks and nuns who, as a result of their passion for the study of the spiritual patrimony of the Order, go ahead of others, opening paths and arousing the desire to travel them. All this was more than enough reason to invite him to teach a course on William of Saint Thierry. As a tireless seeker, Juan María expanded what he had published in the book to share it with us throughout 16 hours of classes, 8 were given in *November 2022* and the other 8 will be given in *February 2023*. Online communication technologies allow several communities of the RE and REMILA to share this course.

The topics developed throughout the course are:

- William's time: Classical Middle Ages, feudal times (11th-12th centuries)
- Birth, formation and first monastic experiences of William of Saint Thierry
- Sense of a meeting and a friendship. One place and two people: William of Saint Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux
- The Human Person (*noverim me, noverim te*)
- Sacrament of the Eucharist and sacramentality of life
- Exercise as spiritual combat
- The experience of God at the heart of life
- Love, simplicity and wisdom: three pillars for the construction of a vital aesthetic
- The complex expression of faith: hermeneutical keys to consider the relevance of William's message and testimony
- The man and the theologian: from the Mystery of Man to the Mystery of God.