



Central Secretariat for Formation – OCSO –
August 2023

Newsletter 35

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

RAFMA

Sessions in the *Clarté-Dieu Abbey, from May 22 to June 3, 2023*

The themes developed were *Vocational, Community and Liturgical* in nature for the young sisters: 3 solemnly professed, 4 temporarily professed, 2 novices and 3 postulants; 12 in total and their formator. It was developed by **Father Justin Muzindusi**, from Mokoto Monastery in the DRC.

The first session: “*Vocational Motivation*”, refers to “3 vocations”. Formation in religious life is by nature relational, because there is no self-formation. This relationship is based on the discernment of motivations. It was found that the basis of every religious vocation is the *human* and *Christian* vocation.

Human anthropology poses the question: **who am I?** I am dust with divine breath (Gn 1 and 2; 2 Cor 4,7). Our fragility must be experienced in the presence of God. My happiness is not in having, knowing, power, but in God!

Christian anthropology opens the human to the person of Jesus “*It is no longer me, it is Christ in me*” (Gal 2,20). Our relationship with the father reflects our relationship with the Father (God).

Religious anthropology, on the other hand, makes us aware of the sacrifice of Jesus. The religious vocation is a free response to obedience, renunciation, detachment, poverty and conversion of life.

In the second part of this session, we address the question of “**Motivation**”. According to Saint Augustine, the foundation of motivation is God himself because “*God gives what he commands*”, he says. The grace of God precedes us. But every vocation is based on Christ and on values. These fulfill 4 functions: utilitarian; defensive; cognitive and expressive

Most of the blocks in religious life come from our fears: fear of not being happy, of failing, of making mistakes, of losing my freedom. True freedom is to be a gift: “*I give my life*” says Jesus. “*I would like my family to know that my life has been given*” (Dom Christian de Chergé beatified in 2019 in Alger)

The third part developed the aspect of “**education**”. It is the process that raises the question of being. There are two “*I*” here. The “**real me**”, the latent me, man is an iceberg,

education allows us to realize that I am a mystery, and knowledge is made in the relationship, abandoning defenses. The “**ideal self**” is made up of ideals, values, charismas, rules of life. The relational self, on the other hand, is characterized by openness to our personal history. To achieve this, the trainers will adopt the 3 virtues of the gardener: Prudence, Patience and Constancy. They will examine the behaviors, attitudes, feelings and needs of the candidates. Realizing that feelings are: neutral, natural and normal (3 N).

To a large extent, we are motivated by our needs: the unsatisfied need or expectation generates frustration, the frustration that we handle is expressed in aggression, which is directed partly towards oneself and partly towards others. On the other hand, the needs for autonomy, to know, to help, to relate, to organize and to play, make life pleasant.

The last part focused on **spiritual accompaniment**, is the help of an older sister or brother sharing a part of the path, to help recognize God’s action and respond to it freely and responsibly. The role of the guide depends on the acceptance and openness of the candidate. RB 48 gives some signs of vocation: human maturity, morality, etc...

The second session : “*Unity in community life, conflict resolution through non-violent communication*” .

The first chapter, *the vocation to unity* reminds us that unity is diversified: cultural, racial, economic, religious; it does not exist as a concrete reality, it has to be invented every day. Sin broke our fellowship with God. The apostles, when they lived turned towards Christ, life was perfect and when they turned towards things, they witnessed a tower of Babel.

If the cause of the division is spiritual, the response will also be spiritual; it is God who ensures unity, as s. Irenaeus of Lyon “*The glory of God is the living man, but the life of man is to contemplate God*”. Therefore, the question arises: *where does the division come from?* It comes from greed, if there is a lack of unity in the community, you have to realize that you are turning towards things: having, knowing, being able, being worthy.

At the end of this chapter we realized that when we enter religious life we bring our conflicts, we do not find them in the community, as one might think, because we have all been expelled from heaven. It is true that unity creates communion, it is also true that conflicts are an opportunity to grow in community.

The second chapter raises the question **how to manage conflicts?** At this stage we have remembered the 3 N, that the conflict is Neutral, Natural and Normal. They express the difference, and the latter is not a threat but a grace. The conflict of *age*, for example, if we try to suppress it, we suppress at the same time the history of the other; and that of *power*? We are all inhabited by the desire for power: “*Who is the greatest?* (Mt 18.1; 20.26; 23.11). And the conflict between *the sexes*? We are sexual beings (secare) cut, separated, incomplete. And what about conflicts of *interest*? We have personal choices and preferences. We must look for what holds us together. To be in search of one's own needs is to make the whole a community of self-actualization instead of a community of transformation.

To manage conflicts we will avoid erroneous strategies: formation of groups, heart-break, direct confrontation, silence, generalization of the problem, solution by force. And we will face the problem, considering that we are all hurt and putting Christ at the center again. We will strengthen the sense of belonging where everyone will be involved in resolving the conflict.

A good collaboration makes it possible to approach the problem in a new way. It makes the community a living organism to be continually created. It requires spiritual and human maturity. Do you really want to know yourself? So collaborate! This goes through “6 D” (in French): Decide, define, develop, identify the best proposal, write, discern the situation.

The third part deals with **the Art of communicating without violence**. True communication at the heart level is at the service of the community. We are afraid to communicate, and this pushes us to wear masks: the critic's mask; of the conciliator; of the computer; distracted. To communicate well, we will be attentive to the needs and expectations of our interlocutors. Communication has its laws: everything is communication, verbal and non-

verbal, all communication is an interaction, the way of speaking influences the way of listening. We free the other avoiding prejudices. Without forgetting the law of the anatomy of the word: a square: in each word there is a self-revelation, an affective perception, a content and an invitation. Good communication isn't a perfect match, but know the difference. It goes through 4 verbs: request, reject, give, receive. It goes through listening (presence to the other or empathy and compassion). *Faced with violence, what to do? Violence or do nothing? Gandhi replies: "Between passivity and violence, I choose violence."* To reflect!

The third session "Initiation to the liturgy" places us at the center of the spirituality of the Church after the Second Vatican Council.

The first chapter **defines the liturgy**, *leitourgia*, meaning work of the people. In the Greek democracies, it meant any service rendered for the common good by the citizens. The Septuagint used the term "*abodah*" to designate the service of the Levites in the Temple. Thus, the liturgy becomes the religious and ritual service rendered to God by the community gathered in his name (cf. Lk 1,23; Heb 8,2; Heb 10,11). For the Second Vatican Council, the liturgy is "*the summit towards which the action of the Church tends and the source from which all its vigor flows*" (SC n°10). The Encyclical *Mediator Dei* (November 20, 1947) of Pope Pius XII, underlined the supernatural reality of the liturgy founded on the *priesthood of Christ and the Mystical Body of Christ Church*.

The Council adds that the liturgy, as a sacred sign, raises to God the prayer of adoration and supplication of the Church, and makes the graces of redemption and sanctification descend on its members.

The next point highlights **the importance of the liturgy in the Church**. It is the continuation of the work of salvation: "*As Christ was sent, so he also sends his apostles.*" Thus, through the sacraments, the liturgy makes Christ present (Mt 18:20). It is necessary, therefore, that the faithful access it with the dispositions of a straight soul, harmonizing their soul with their voice (Cf. RB 20), an undivided heart (Ps 118,80), in a conscious, active and fruitful way.

The next part deals with the **Liturgical Cycle**: Odo Casel (1886-1948), tells us that on God's part there is only one *divine "today"*, which is not different from the human "*today*". When we say '*now*', this '*no*' immediately flows; he is a fugitive today. But for God it is a today that does not pass. Thus, the history of salvation culminates in the '*fullness of time*'. With Christ begins the *last hour* (1Jn2,18), the time of the Church until the parousia.

Consequently, the liturgical calendar indicates fixed and mobile feasts and fairs. This calendar is made up of two superimposed cycles: **the seasonal one**, which is essentially mobile, and is organized around the Holy Week festivity; and **the santoral** that celebrates the saints and the Virgin Mary, divided between solemnities, festivals, obligatory and optional memories.

The Eucharistic celebration is at the center of the liturgy, the word itself evokes the feeling of gratitude, of gratitude, it is still called the mass or sacrifice of the mass and the Reformation calls it 'Supper'. According to the testimony of Saint Justin (150), the Eucharistic celebration took place on Sunday, during a synagogal-type meeting of prayers and readings, and the Mass consisted of two parts: the word and the Eucharist that was linked to a meal: partition of the bread accompanied by a prayer of thanksgiving. Furthermore, time is sanctified by the liturgy of the hours. Thus we realize this truth "*I will bless the Lord at all times*" (Ps 33). This liturgy of the hours is the voice of the wife to the husband (cf. SC n°2, n° 84).

The last part talked about the **monastic rite**, taking as a reference book: "*Christ, Ideal of the Monk*" by Dom Colomba Marmion 'the theologian of the liturgy'.

We thank everyone who participated in or authorized these sessions.



ORIENS

Twenty-nine formators from all the monasteries in the ORIENS region gathered at *Rawaseneng, Indonesia*, from *1st to 9th June 2023*. This meeting was the first time the formators met since 2018. We spend three days discussing the formation reports from each monastery. We looked at the various formation issues and shared on the joys and challenges as formators.

Two days were dedicated to lectures by **Fr. Julius Sunardi SCJ**, an Indonesian religious priest and a clinical psychologist trained in the USA. He spoke on *"Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults: A Protection, Healing and Reconciliation Project of the Church."* We found his safeguarding lectures informative and valuable in our work as formators.

We visited the sisters at Gedono and a Marian shrine on our free day. On the last night, we had a celebratory supper with the Rawaseneng community and enjoyed some performances.

*Please see the attached document for the summary of the conferences.
Some photographs of the meeting have already been published on this website:
<https://ocso.org/2023/06/10/oriens-formators-meeting/?lang=es>*

REM

After a first attempt in May, a leading group of Italian coaches went to *Vitorchiano from July 3 to 7* for the usual Formators Course. Among the participants: M. Elisabetta and Sr. M. Donata (Poor Clares) from Albano, Fr. Giovanni from Boschi, Sr. Maria di Cortona, Sr. Tavita del Soke (Angola), M. M. Carmela and Sr. Sara (Augustinians) of Lecceto, Sr. Irene de Palaçuolo (Portugal), M. Eleonora and Sr. Laura (Discalced Carmelites) of Sassuolo, Br. Matteo de Tre Fontane, M. Martha de Acque Salvie / Tre Fontane, Sr. Fatima and Sr. Valeria de

Valserena, Sr. Alba and Sr. M. Giovanna of Vitorchiano. Some, with regret, had to give up the meeting and so the possibility was opened for other monastic realities to share our working days.

The two speakers, **Fr. Loris Tomassini** de Frattocchie and **Fr. Francesco La Rocca, OSB**, developed for us the theme: *“Liturgical experience and senses spiritual”*, a theme we chose last year because, in the materialistic age in which we live, the bodily senses are overstimulated while the spiritual senses are ignored and therefore neglected and closed to the supernatural.

Fr. Loris presented us with some chapters of his book: *In the Sign of Beauty. Beauty, liturgy and spiritual senses*¹. In the first conference he summarized the first three chapters: I) The path of beauty; II) Beauty, epiphany of God; III) Liturgy and beauty, to introduce us to chapter IV: The sensitive in the Liturgy. He described beauty to us as a royal road that leads to God, to God's own Revelation, and how the Lord reaches man through the spiritual senses.

In the second conference he explained to us some points from chapter V: tasting, seeing, touching, hearing the goodness-beauty of God, how the bodily senses are ordered to faith that opens us to spiritual reality. And one of the privileged places where the believer can exercise the spiritual senses from the perception-experience of Beauty in the Mystery that is celebrated is the Eucharistic celebration. In the last conference Fr. Loris presented chapter VI: The mystical experience of the mystery in the liturgy. “Mysticism and contemplation cannot develop only in silence, in contemplative practice outside of liturgical prayer. In the monastic tradition, the path to mysticism has always passed through Scripture and the liturgy. [...] Mysticism has its roots in the liturgy. Through the holy mysteries we become one with God, we divinize ourselves. [...] It is necessary to return mysticism to the liturgy, to recreate the unity between liturgy and mysticism”.

Fr. Francis in the first lecture he introduced us to a great “ecclesiastical writer” and genius of Christian thought, *Origen*, to then examine some passages from his works, *De principiis, Contra Celsum, Dispute with Heraclid*, which speak of the spiritual senses.

In the second conference, through the analysis of the text of the *Preface to the Homilies on the Song of Songs and the First Homily on the Song of Songs*, he showed us how Origen traces the progressive path of man in faith, in that the outer man, modeled in the clay of the earth, harmonizes with the inner man, made in the image and likeness of God, to reach the maturity of Christ.

In the last conference, Fr. Francisco presented us with a traditional text from Origen, *Commentary on the Book of Numbers 33*, in which the author describes the 42 stages of the Israelites who left the land of Egypt. Origen analyzes the etymology of the names of the various localities (place names) that the Israelites pass through and, using the meaning of these names, describes the path of the people of Israel as an analogy of the spiritual path of man: how the soul is educated and progresses from life to life, how he learns to discern good and evil, how the soul is tempted despite progress: temptations as custody and protection.

At the end of each conference of the speakers, dialogues followed that allowed each participant to share their personal experiences in the field of formation, within a deep and respectful dialogue. We have seen the same formative concerns: What is the liturgical experience of young people today? What is our proposal? How can we help people in formation to have a sincere encounter with the Lord who looks at man in his entirety, overcoming those sterile forms of sentimentality, moralism and mysticism? How to help them enter into self-knowledge on a path of truth and rediscovery of their own filial dignity? How can we help them in their relationship with authority and with the formators themselves? How to do lectio divina, how to live the liturgy, personal prayer?

¹A book review, written by Sr. Marie-Bernard de Wilde OCSO, Klaarland, was published in French in *Collectanea* 4/22-47.

Despite the diversity of charisms, we all recognized the importance of continuing to give a clear Christian proposal that is supported by the pillars of monastic life: Lectio, Liturgy, Work, Common Life. The exchanges between us of experiences, contents, proposals and The search for a response to today's needs took place in a very fraternal and free climate that allowed us to work fruitfully while respecting the various charisms present. And for this we thank everyone for their availability and involvement.



Finally, the meeting ended with the intention of deepening and working on the “Desire for God”, which dwells in the human heart, based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

During one day of our work we received the visit of Fr. Luc de Taizé , accompanied by Fr. Raphaël , secretary of our Abbot General, who came to Vitorchiano to pray at the tomb of our Blessed M. Gabriella and to pray for the work that are taking place in Rome in preparation for the youth meeting on September 30 in Rome: www.together2023.net . The meeting with Fr. Luc allowed us to learn more about the Taizé community and the program of this meeting, and to share our monastic experiences in community within a synodal and ecumenical exchange.