

**MOVING TOWARDS THE FUTURE
PROPOSALS
ON FORMATION AND STUDIES**

**FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL O.F.M.
FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES
(SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA – SPAIN)
27/11 TO 8/12 – 2000**

ROME

General Secretariate for Formation and Studies
2001

PRESENTATION

From the 27th November to the 8th December 2000 the ordinary meeting of the International Council for Formation and Studies of the Order was held in Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

The Council, besides reflecting on the situation of Formation and Studies in the Order today, studied the following topics: *Ratio Formationis*, The Pastoral Care of Vocations, Spiritual and Vocational Accompaniment and the abandonment of the Order by solemnly professed Friars.

The “Proposals” we now present are the fruits of its study and reflection. The GSFS, accepting the decision of the Council, had put the proposals presented by the different work groups into order and given them the definitive form in which they now appear in the final document of the Congress “**Moving towards the Future**”.

There only remains for me to ask the Ministers and Formators to take this document into consideration at the time of programming and revising Formation, both initial and ongoing, in their Entities.

Rome, 6th January 2001

Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Secretary General for Formation and Studies.

TO ALL MINISTERS AND FORMATORS

Dear Brothers Ministers and Formators:

From Santiago de Compostela we send each and every one of you a cordial salutation of Peace and Good.

This is the ninth meeting of the International Council for Formation and Studies. The said Council meets every two years to examine the situation of Formation and Studies in the Order and to study the topics that have been assigned to it by the Minister General and his Definitory. It had been arranged to hold this meeting of the Council in Jerusalem but, at the last moment, because of the political situation existing in the Land of Jesus, our meeting took place at St. Francis in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

In the city of the Apostle James 14 of the 15 Delegates, who form the International Council for Formation and Studies of the O.F.M. and represent the different Conferences of the Order, met. The members of the General Secretariate for Formation and Study, Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary, and Fr. Ernest Siekierka, Vice-Secretary, accompanied us during the whole meeting.

Responding to the objectives for which the International Council for Formation and Studies had been instituted, we dedicated the first days of our meeting to finding out the situation of Formation and Studies in the Order. To that end the Secretary General for Formation and Studies, as is customary, presented a report on the activities of the General Secretariate, over which he presides, pointing out the positive aspects and the gaps in the Formation and Studies of the Order and made some concrete proposals for the next two years. Each Delegate, on his part, gave a report on the situation of Formation and Studies in their own Conference.

We dedicated the second part of the celebration of the Congress to the study of the topics the Minister General and his Definitory had assigned to us. On this occasion the topics proposed for our reflection were the following: *Ratio Studiorum*, The Pastoral Care of Vocations, Spiritual and Vocational Accompaniment and the Abandonments of the Order by solemnly professed Friars. Frs. José Rodríguez Carballo, José Manuel Bernárdez and Santiago Agrelo were entrusted with the responsibility for presenting the topics mentioned. Following each presentation the

Delegates, broken up into three language groups, worked on the topics presented with a view to pass on later to the presentation of proposals in the plenary session. On the sixth day the Delegates approved the “Proposals” presented by the different work groups, entrusting them to the General Secretariate for Formation and Studies to give them their definitive form before publication.

Dear Brothers Ministers and Formators: These days spent together in Santiago de Compostela –during which the truly fraternal reception by the Compostela Province and Fraternity helped us to joyfully celebrate the gift of being brothers – served us well in making us more conscious of the lights, the shadows and the challenges that formation presents in its distinct stages.

Among the **lights** we would like to underline the following:

Among the brothers there is growing, with greater force each day, the consciousness that without Ongoing Formation it is impossible to have an adequate Initial Formation.

The idea is developing in many of us, ever more solidly, that Ongoing Formation is not only a question of carrying out some “up-dating” activities but requires a profound change in mentality.

In both the Order and the Provinces, the “Sabbaticals” are more and more organised and are taken seriously as intense times of renewal of life.

In addition to the courses run by the GSFS there are already various Conferences that plan formation courses for their Formators.

There is a growing awareness among formators of the importance of personalised accompaniment for our friars in formation.

Collaboration in initial formation is increasing among the different Entities, especially in regard to the year of noviciate.

The Provinces trying to establish a “Year of specific Franciscan Formation” are many already.

The Friars are also becoming more aware of the need for a serious intellectual formation in order to give a more suitable and qualified service to the person of today.

Among the **shadows** we cannot remain silent on the following:

The numbers of Formators dedicated “part-time” to this “ministry” are more than that desired or hoped for when, in fact, it should be a priority.

The “figure” of the Formator continues to be improvised too frequently without giving him suitable preparation for this service. This is also applicable to the Animator of the Pastoral Care of Vocations.

In many Entities the specific Franciscan Formation is reduced to the year of noviciate.

In some Entities the formation given to the non-clerical brothers is minimal.

In many Entities the effort put into initial formation is much greater than that put into ongoing formation which brings about an imbalance, often “dangerous”, between the two.

Frequently there is a lack of real integration of studies into Franciscan formation,

which brings about a dichotomy between studies and formation.
In many geographical areas it appears that the preoccupation for numbers of candidates predominates over their quality. This has a decisive influence on vocational discernment.

Among the more urgent **challenges** it seems opportune to us to point out the following:

The suitable formation of the Formators and Animators of the Pastoral Care of Vocations.

Each Entity should work out a project for the Pastoral Care of Vocations.

Bring about that all friars take on their role of being animators of the Pastoral Care of Vocations.

The personalised accompaniment of our young men.

Assure an adequate, specifically Franciscan Formation.

Appreciate the postulancy as a true formative stage.

Each Entity should have an ongoing Formation Project.

The recent solemnly professed friars should be accompanied in a convenient way.

Dear Brothers Ministers and Formators: At the end of our meeting we felt the need to give thanks. And we began thanking the “Father of Mercies” for all the benefits we have received from him, in particular that of our vocation (cf. *ClatTest* 1-2) and that of the brothers with which the Lord continues to enrich us constantly (cf. *Test.* 14).

To you, Brothers Ministers, we wish to express our most cordial and fraternal recognition for all that you are doing in the field of Formation and Studies. We ask you to continue offering us this service of animation, especially in regard to ongoing Formation, the “humus” of initial Formation and the Pastoral Care of Vocations. We equally ask you to pay special attention to the young friars who were solemnly professed recently.

To all those who share with us the formative “ministry” we wish to say a word of encouragement for your work, which is also ours. Formation is not an easy task, but it is fundamental for the present and the future of Entities. It is not always a thankful labour. Its fruits are few and disillusionment is frequent. But we have to recognise that it is beautiful and worth while to help in the growth of persons. Often we have the impression of being alone. But it is not so. The friars of the Order engaged on the same front, fighting against the same difficulties and enjoying the same gifts that the Lord gives to all of us who are in formation are many.

Dear Brothers Ministers and Formators: we are convinced that the Spirit, the first Formator, continues to work. Neither you nor we are alone. This is not the time to toy with dreams or to rejoice prematurely. It is time to continue trusting in the Spirit and in our possibilities. It is the time to strengthen all that is positive and good in our formative work and to accept, with courage and resolution, the challenges that Formation in the Order presents to us. May Mary Immaculate fetch from her Son the

strength and courage for us to respond to our mission of animators of the task of formation in our Entities. May the Apostle James, to whose tomb we made pilgrimage, imbue us with his passion to live and preach the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which through profession we have promised to observe faithfully (cf. *RB* 1, 1).

Renewing our undertaking in favour of the friars that the Lord has entrusted to us, we send you from Santiago a cordial and fraternal salutation in the Seraphic Father and we hand over to you the PROPOSALS ON FORMATION AND STUDIES from our meeting, confident that they will be well received.

Santiago de Compostela, 8th December 2000.

The members of the International Council O.F.M. for Formation and Studies.

PROPOSALS ON FORMATION AND STUDIES

1. On the Pastoral Care of Vocations (PCV).

“The problem of vocations is a real challenge which directly concerns the various Institutes but also involves the whole Church... Besides promoting prayer for vocations, it is essential to act, by means of explicit presentation and appropriate catechises, with a view to encouraging in those called to the consecrated life that free, willing and generous response which carries into effect the grace of vocation” (Vita Consecrata (VC) 64). “The responsibility for encouraging and supporting new vocations belongs to the all fraternities and to all the individual friars” (General Constitutions – GGCC 145).

1.1. Taking account of the International Congress for O.F.M. Animators of the PCV, held in Assisi from the 7th to the 30th October 2000, we propose:

That the General Secretariate (GSFS) and the provincial Secretariates for Formation and Studies should promote the knowledge and application of the final document of the Congress *“The Lord gives me Brothers”*.

That taking into account the said document and the Orientations for the PCV, which the GSFS is elaborating at the moment, each Entity and, if possible, each Conference should work out their own PCV Project during 2001-2002.

That the next International Council for Formation and Studies should evaluate the putting into practice, in the Entities and Conferences of the Order, of the proposals of the International Congress for Animators of the PCV.

1.2. With the aim of enabling the young aspirants to know our life better and closer and, at the same time, to allow them a suitable vocational accompaniment, we propose that:

Each Province should designate a “vocational fraternity of welcome” in which the Animator of the PCV would live and, if possible, some other member of the provincial Team for PCV.

1.3. To make the friars sensitive to their responsibility for the PCV, we propose that:

Each year, one or various days of reflection and study on the PCV be introduced into the programmes of on-going formation.

The Animator of PCV should periodically visit the different Fraternities of the Province in order to explain to them the provincial project for PCV and to have all the friars participate in the different activities of Youth and Vocational Pastoral work.

They pray for vocations in every fraternity each day.

1.4. With the aim of properly preparing the Animators of PCV, we propose the following:

The GSFS should organise courses for Youth and Vocational Pastoral Work, directed principally at the Animators of PCV. If at all possible, these courses should be held in collaboration with the Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum in Rome.

The Conferences should also organise these activities of a formative nature for the Animators of PCV in their own territories.

1.5. To make the People of God adequately aware of the vocational problem we propose that:

In the ordinary pastoral activity the different types of vocation be presented, paying special attention to the Franciscan vocation.

That special days of prayer for vocations and of vocational catechises be organised each year.

2. On Initial Formation

Initial formation is an “evolving process” to which “sufficient time should be reserved”. “Formation is a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father” that has as its “*primary objective*... to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ, at the service of the Church’s mission”. As such, it “should involve the whole person” and facilitate “the harmonious integration of all its various aspects” (*VC* 65). “Initial formation begins on the day a candidate is admitted to postulancy in our Order and lasts until the day of his definitive commitment, ratified by solemn profession” (*GGCC* 148).

2.1. In order that formation may be ever more attentive to the person and may encourage an active attitude in the whole formative process on the part of the one being formed (cf. *GGCC* 141, 2), we propose the following:

That the master/companion should help and guide the candidates, from the time of noviciate, in the working out of their personal Project of life.

The masters/companions should take on the spiritual and vocational accompaniment of each candidate –“personalised” accompaniment”- as their “priority ministry” (cf. *GGCC* 141,1), showing themselves disposable to personal dialogue... which should take place with a certain frequency (cf. *VC* 66).

In the accompaniment, during the whole period of initial formation, special attention should be paid to the following core topics: Faith and Relationship with God, Fraternal Life in Community, Emotions-Sexuality.

Initial Formation be carried out in real fraternities –not in vocational hothouses- in which the accompaniment of the candidates is taken on as one of the priority tasks and the number of candidates and formators make such accompaniment really possible.

2.2. In order that formation assures the growth of the friars in a real fraternity, as is required by our charism and our *GGCC* (3, 1), we propose that:

Initial formation should be in common for all the friars as regards place, significant experience, accompaniment and opportunities for study and “professionalisation”.

That there be assured, at all stages of initial formation, a suitable formation that is specifically Franciscan, bearing in mind the “Principles of Franciscan Formation” as the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* (40-56) presents.

That, where possible, a year of formation that is specifically Franciscan be established for after first profession.

That in the Conferences or Countries, where it is possible, formative meetings of friars in initial formation and in “intensive times” of formation for those friars preparing for Solemn Profession be organised.

3. On the Formation of Formators

“Those in charge of formation must therefore be very familiar with the path of seeking God, so as to be able to accompany others on this journey... They will combine the illumination of spiritual wisdom with the light shed by human means, which can be a help both in discerning the call and in forming the new man or woman, until they are genuinely free” (VG 66). “The Order and the Provinces are to draw up programmes for the preparation of formation personnel... provide for their on-going formation, and supply them with the means necessary to carry out the duty entrusted to them” (GGCC 142).

3.1. To achieve a fitting formation for the directors of formation, who face such “sensitive tasks” (cf. *VC* 66), we propose that:

Each Entity should pay special attention to the formation of formators and that each Conference should set up specific courses for this purpose. These courses should be supported and accompanied in the economic aspect by the GSFS also.

The GSFS should continue to organise courses for formators, taking account of the different language areas.

In the courses for formators, both those organised by the Conferences and by the GSFS, the following core topics should be kept in mind: Faith and Relationship with God, Fraternal Life in Community, Emotions-Sexuality.

4. On Ongoing Formation

“The commitment to formation never ends” (VC 65). “Continuing formation is an intrinsic requirement of religious consecration” (VC 69). The on-going formation of the friars is a journey of their whole life, in which their own gifts, their witness to the Gospel and their choice of calling are constantly developed” (GGCC 135).

4.1. To respond to this requirement of the religious and Franciscan life we propose the following:

That each Entity should work out a project of ongoing formation that gives “a precise and systematic description of its plan... with a programme that encompasses their whole life” (VC 69), taking account of the distinct phases of life (cf. VC 70) and the different ministries carried out by the friars.

That each Entity, through its formation Project, should assure that the initial formation is linked into the ongoing formation, “thereby creating a readiness on everyone’s part to let themselves be formed every day of their lives” (VC 69). That such a project should guarantee also the continuity of ongoing formation with initial formation, so that there are no sharp jumps or ruptures between one and the other.

That between the different Entities there should be a greater interchange of ongoing formation programmes.

That the initiatives for ongoing formation organised up to now by the GSFS should continue.

4.2. *“In the consecrated life the first years of full involvement in the apostolate are a critical stage, marked by the passage from a supervised life to a situation of full responsibility for one’s work” (VC 70).* To nip the difficulties proper to this stage “of full involvement in the apostolate” in the bud, we propose that:

That each Entity should nominate a suitably prepared friar to appropriately accompany the friars who are in this stage, in such a way as to “inspire” and “help them to live to the full the freshness of their love and enthusiasm for Christ” (VC 70).

That special attention be paid to not overburdening newly-professed friars with duties and ministries.

That the meeting of friars in this stage, both from a Province and from a Conference, for reflection, sharing and celebrating together the gift of vocation, be facilitated.

That the GSFS should propose a “basic programme” of accompaniment/formation for friars of recent solemn profession.

5. On Studies

“Franciscan formation dedicates adequate time to study, allowing for the particular gifts of each friar”” (RFF 53).

The GSFS should promote a reflection on studies and their relationship to our identity throughout the Order.

Each province, having regard for the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Order, should elaborate its own *Ratio Studiorum*.

Each Province should suitably programme the preparation of friars in the different branches of knowledge, giving preference to the disciplines of philosophy, theology and those of a Franciscan nature.

Each Province should put friars who would dedicate themselves to research and teaching at the disposal of the Centres of Study of the Order especially.