

- 3) Since, often the Delegates are not able to satisfy all the needs asked by the formation journey of an Institute, it is opportune to avail of qualified and competent members from within the Institute to whom are assigned some “specific moments” and themes of formation.

GENERAL GUIDELINES OF THE FORMATION *ITER* FOR THE AGGREGATED INSTITUTES

THE HOUSE BUILT ON THE ROCK

Premise

- 1) This document does not present a specific formation *Iter*, but contains general guidelines and principles that ought to guide the formation of the members of the Aggregated Institutes. In every Circumscription, each Delegate, together with his Council, on the basis of these general guidelines, shall elaborate their own specific formation *Iter*, applying it concretely to their own context, both socio-cultural, and taking into account the formative level of the members.
- 2) The document has two parts: the first part presents the general themes on Pauline formation; the second part contains useful elements for the elaboration of a formative *Iter* on the part of the Circumscription and of every Institute.
- 3) It is hoped that this document will help give a common direction to the formation of the members of the Aggregated Institutes.

FIRST PART — GENERAL THEMES

1. Importance of formation

Already in the Apostolic Constitution “*Provvida Mater Ecclesia*” of 2 February 1947, which establishes the Secular Institutes, emphasis is placed on the importance of formation: “... *with a serious and prudent selection of members, with an accurate and sufficiently long formation, with an adequate, austere and, at the same, time agile life*”

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regime, also in the world, if there is a special divine vocation, with the help of grace, an intimate and effective consecration of oneself to the Lord can be achieved with certainty, not only internally, but also externally...” (PM no. 9).

As regard formation in the Secular Institutes, Vatican II urges a particular attention to it. The Secular Institutes cannot discharge their mission in the world *“unless the members be thoroughly trained in matters divine and human so that they are truly a leaven in the world for the strengthening and growth of the body of Christ. Superiors, therefore, should give serious attention especially to the spiritual training to be given members as well as encourage their further formation.”*¹

Father Alberione, in his Instructions he gave in the course of Special Spiritual Exercises in 1960, enumerated all the Institutes of the Pauline Family. He then said: *“Such fervor and life-giving light must flow from the Pauline priest, who has here a great and delicate ministry. Thus, secondly, what is needed is his updating to the various Institutes, so as to give what is his to give, in conformity with the rules of Canon Law, and to receive in exchange that which conforms to the nature and the spirit of the Church. A great responsibility! There must be that one spirit which filled the heart of Saint Paul: ‘cor Pauli, cor Christi’; the devotions are the same; and the various goals are geared to a common and general goal which is to give the whole Christ to the world, in the way he defined himself: ‘I am the Way, the Truth and the Life’” (Jn 14:6).*²

From this passage, we can deduce that the Founder delegates to the priests of the Society of St. Paul this *“great and delicate ministry”* and it is the duty of the Pauline priests *“updated on the various Institutes”*

¹ Perfectae caritatis , 11

² Ut Perfectus sit homo Dei, I UPS 20

For this reason, the Delegates should propose to them the writings of the Founder regarding our specific Pauline spirituality and mission.

Suggested writings common to all:

- The Gospels and the Letters of Saint Paul
- Life of Fr. Alberione
- Ut perfectus sit homo Dei
- Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae
- Donec formetur Christus in Vobis
- The Apostle Paul, Inspirer and Model
- The Publishing Apostolate
- Encyclical Letters of Pope Francis
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Vatican II Documents
- Documents of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and of Society of Apostolic Life
- Documents of the Local Conference of Bishops
- Annual Letters of the SSP Superior General

Useful Indications

- 1) It is opportune to indicate, where it is possible, formative “opportune times” participated by the members of the Aggregated Institutes present in a given territory.
- 2) The Formation *Iter* of each Institute should have the approval of the Government of the Circumscription and sent to the General Delegate of the Institutes. For the elaboration of the *Iter*, it is useful to adopt the “synodal methodology,” involving all the members of the Institute.

- **Mary Most Holy of the Annunciation**
 - Mary’s “Yes” becomes the icon of the Institute.
 - The total availability of Mary to God’s Project and Jesus’ Incarnation in her in order to give him to humanity are the elements that carry the identity and vocation of the Annunciationist.
 - The female genius at the service of proclamation and evangelization.

- **Holy Family**
 - The conjugal state, specific of the Institute of Holy Family, ought to bring a particular vision of consecration to God through the vows, one of which is the vow of chastity.
 - The specific identity of the Institute is centered on the Family as a place and as exercise of relationships of love and of passing the testimony to the new generations.
 - It is the vision of Family which should “color” the testimony, the state of being in the world, the apostolate, and the spiritual life of ISF members. The encyclical *Amoris Laetitia* can be a source of inspiration.

i Instruments — Study Aids

The study aids that are suggested are those common ones that every member of each Institute can go to and study. It is evident that given the specific character of each Institute, and the diverse cultural level of the members of the Circumcision, each Delegate ought to have the wisdom to propose works adapted to, and meaningful, to the members. Particular attention must be given by the Delegates of the Institute of Jesus Priest. The members of this Institute have already finished the curriculum of studies and have a certain cultural level.

to give them “*the fervor and life-giving light*” in the practice of formation.

Two other recurring elements in the Founder’s writings on the Secular Institutes imply the necessity and the need for adequate and serious formation. The two elements that he often underlined are:

- a) “**Your life in the world** to observe the holy vows; to live consecrated to God, **is a life that requires a lot of spiritual work, a lot of piety and a lot of vigilance in order not to fall into temptations.**”³ “... in a certain way **you live in greater danger and it is much more difficult to observe chastity, obedience, the apostolate in the environment in which you live, in the various activities of the day, on various occasions and in various places.**”⁴

- b) the insistence that to enter a Secular Institute one needs to have “the vocation”: “**One needs to have the vocation, but that vocation has its particularities there.**”⁵

In formation, different attention is to be given to the members of the Institute of Jesus Priest and the Institute of the Holy Family.

For the priests of the Institute of Jesus Priest, it is to be borne in mind that the parish priests and the diocesan clergy (professors, those responsible of the diocesan curia...), who ask to be part of the IGS or who are already professed, have undergone long formation in the seminary and, for admission to the priesthood, have already the academic degrees, etc. In fact, the one who asks to enter has already

³ MCS, pp. 7-8

⁴ MCS, pp. 184-185

⁵ AAP, pp. 128-129

many spiritual and pastoral responsibilities and wants something more. Besides, they already participate in encounters of permanent formation organized by the Diocese and also in the monthly recollections programmed by the Diocese. In other words, they find themselves in a situation of formation very much different from those of other Institutes which, instead, need to receive basic biblical-theological-spiritual formation.

What the IGS members need is a stimulating animation on Pauline spirituality, on the apostolic Pauline mysticism lived and taught by Fr. Alberione. Moreover, they need to know the Pauline Family, to understand always better and to keep watch of the gift of consecration and the profession of the Evangelical Counsels, to cultivate a wide mental and pastoral opening to know how to gather the signs of the times, to know how to get out of the sacristy to reach out to those in the periphery, to value the fastest and most efficacious means to evangelize, to love the Pope and to follow his magisterium.

For the members of the Institute of the Holy Family, formation is based on two specific pivots of their state of life: 1) the particular vision which they ought to give to their consecration to God through the vows, one of which is chastity; 2) the particular identity of the Institute centered on the Family as place and the exercise of relationship and love as space from which they pass on the witness to the new generations (the children). It is the vision of the Family which governs the testimony, the state of being in the world, the apostolate, the spiritual life. *“Marriage is a precious sign, for ‘when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is, as it were, ‘mirrored’ in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love... This has concrete daily consequences, because the spouses, ‘in virtue of the sacrament, are invested with a true and proper mission, so that, starting with the*

- Apostolic activities specific to an Institute that has vocational underpinning.

h. Elements of specific formation for each Institute

In addition to the common elements, each Pauline Aggregated Institute also has its own specific elements.

– Jesus Priest

“We thank you for admitting us to your presence to perform the priestly service.” This is the vision within which the whole life and activity of the priest acquires meaning. The style becomes that of Paul:

- The priest prays in the name of, and for all, the people of God;
- Takes upon himself and brings to the Lord the needs of his people;
- Struggles, suffers and gives his life by dedicating himself to his people;
- Is grasped by Christ and is indebted to everyone;
- Is a mediator between Christ and his people.

– St. Gabriel the Archangel

- Messenger of the good news to people today but who also brings to God their answer, with all their worries, difficulties. He is a mediator who lives in contact with God and in contact with the human person of today of whom he takes responsibility.
- He renews reality: transfigures reality and the people he meets by giving them new life, new hope.

apostolic activity as specific expression assumed by the Institute; for example, forming a “centre for the family,” “centre for listening,” “centre of culture.”

f. The stages of Formation

The stages of formation must not be reduced only to content to be known and learned, but must be characterized by specific life experiences for each stage, and by constant accompaniment:

- Aspirancy: experience of an encounter: with Jesus, with the Institute.
- Postulancy: experience of discernment: who I am and what I want; what Jesus wants of me.
- Novitiate: experience of a choice: I decide for Christ in the world and in the Pauline Institute of consecrated secular life.
- Temporary profession: experience of a free giving of self.
- Perpetual profession: experience of a totality: all of myself for Christ, all Christ in me. Consecration for a mission.
- Ongoing formation: Easter experience: building the new man “a little every day.” Straining forward.

g. Vocation promotion

- The testimony of life that becomes “contagion,” communication.
- Insertion in parochial, voluntary activities.
- Promote encounters on the themes of vocation and on consecration of lay people.
- Organize and create cultural centres open to all, also on social networks as service to the needy among the people.

*simple ordinary things of life they can make visible the love with which Christ loves his Church and continues to give his life for her.’*⁶

Concluding this part, it is important to underline that the formative action is not reduced to a “refilling” of contents, but is a transfer of experience, a transfer of the Pauline spirit.

2. The qualities of our Pauline formation

a. Formation as a permanent and qualifying, dynamic process,

Convinced that the quality and future of each Institute is at stake in this area,

between the period of the first formation and the one that follows, there is the danger of a fracture, likely to provoke a crisis. When one starts walking with one’s legs without the formator’s caring guide, it is possible to have a slip. Formation must be wanted and taken actively and permanently by the person who feels responsible for it. For this reason one speaks of ongoing formation, which: **“makes up for the inevitable shortcomings of the early stages; constitutes an indispensable aid for continuous updating, in the discernment of true values and in an illuminated reading of the signs of the times; allows to overcome moments of fatigue, due to an intense life or isolation or age or other circumstances; supports the constant effort of spiritual renewal in order not to fail in total and growing fidelity even when the momentum and enthusiasm of the beginnings are lacking; becomes attentive to the new needs of apostolic presence.”**⁷

b. Personalized formation and constant accompaniment

⁶ Amoris Laetitia, 121

⁷ Document of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (CRIS), *Formation in Secular Institutes*, Rome 6 April 1980, no. 53

“In order to truly help the person to respond to one’s own vocation and mission in the world, ... formation in a Secular Institute must favour the integral development of the person himself, according to his ability and conditions. Therefore, it requires a sufficiently true knowledge of the person in formation by the subject himself and by the formator not only as regard his spiritual gifts and his journey of faith, but also under the human aspects of intelligence, openness, sensitivity, balance, emotional and moral maturity, capacity for autonomy and commitment, etc.”⁸ To start a personalized formation it is important, therefore, to know the candidate’s starting point and, therefore, to check in order to know his starting conditions. Aspects to be reinforced are to be discovered, others to be rectified, others to be started. “The common vocation of those who join the same Institute requires elements of content and method, in formation, common to all. But God calls by name: vocation, even in communion, is personal. Formation is also necessarily personal.”⁹

Personalized formation translates concretely into a life program that accompanies the whole existence of the person. This is what our Founder asks all Paulines at the end of their spiritual exercises.

c. Formation oriented towards consecration in “secularity”

The aspects inherent in the orientation of formation for Secular Institutes towards “consecration,” “secularity,” “being leaven and ferment in human reality,” can be examined singularly, but this does not mean separation, because they intersect and sometimes overlap. Since the life of the candidate takes place “in the world,” his/her formation in its various areas, human-professional-religious-Pauline, must be oriented to live his/her integral identity in the world.

⁸ Idem, nos. 17-18)

⁹ Idem, n. 22

- **Jesus Master Truth:** in the knowledge of the Master and his Word, as what St. Paul once did, we recognize the truth about ourselves, of society and of the world today, of the Church, of the Institute, of the Pauline Family, of the Founder.
- **Jesus Master Life.** We acknowledge the Master as the Lord of our life, Life of our life. From him we received the ability and grace to be a new creature for a new humanity.

d. Formative mediations

- Who “forms” is God.
- We, as active and permanent subjects of the formation process.
- The environment: made up of people, “mentalities,” stimuli, modes, as elements of help and comparison.

e. Formative areas

For a Pauline integral formation the Founder referred to the image of the cart running on “four wheels”:

- **Formation on poverty:** human formation, formation on emotional maturity, formation on “Alberionian” poverty.
- **Formation on holiness:** charismatic-spiritual formation and formation on Pauline spirituality: to give Jesus Master, Way, Truth, and Life, under the gaze of Mary Queen of Apostles, with the spirit of the Apostle Paul.
- **Formation on study/“studiosità”:** intellectual, cultural and professional formation for the mission.
- **Formation on the apostolate:** formation for the specific Pauline mission in the world of communication: there is an apostolic, individual activity dependent on one’s standing in society; there is also an apostolic activity as expression of being a member of the Pauline Family; lastly, there is an

1st Objective: configuration, conformation to Christ, Christification which makes us new creatures: “Grow up to the full stature of Christ”²⁶; “Put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth”²⁷; “Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor 5:17). Consecration with the profession of vows becomes a sign of this task and together the modality chosen to witness and to answer to the first of the commandments: love God with your whole mind...

2nd Objective: Consecration for the mission: to transfigure social reality from within. For this, one ought:

- i. To form the mature, complete, relational human person
- ii. To form the adult Christian
- iii. To form the apostle: called (vocation) and consecrated for a specific mission in the world (secularity) in the culture of communication.

c. The methodology for achieving the objectives

The methodology applies and follows the stages of the central nucleus of our spirituality and our mission, which is to give Jesus Master, Way, Truth and Life:

- **Jesus Master Way:** in the Master, we decide the path and the choices of our personal, social, professional, ecclesial life. The Divine Master becomes our Way to the Father, the way of salvation.

²⁶ Cf. Eph 4:13

²⁷ Cf. Eph 4:24

*“In the Secular Institutes, the assumption of the evangelical counsels in their meaning of total following of Christ, with an unconditional and definitive commitment to live possessed by the presence of God, to ‘give oneself totally to God in perfect charity,’¹⁰ confers a ‘true consecration.’”¹¹ “Secular consecration is therefore a form of consecrated life in full and total sense. It is in no way a by-product or a middle ground between religious consecration and baptismal consecration.”¹² “But while the religious want to live this commitment more in the perspective of transcendence ... the members of the Secular Institutes want to live it more in **a perspective of incarnation**, that is, to bring within the human values of solidarity and dignity the ferment of the Christian values of fraternal love and freedom of the children of God. It is a consecration in the world.”¹³ For this reason secularity for the Secular Institutes, as Paul VI says “does not represent only a sociological condition, an external fact, but so much as attitude: to be present in the world, to know how to be responsible in serving it, to configure it according to God in a more just and human way, to sanctify it from within ...” (2.2.1972), because: “**Your existential and sociological condition becomes your theological reality**, it is your way to achieve and witness to salvation” (20.9.1972).¹⁴*

“This means being prophetic presences in a very concrete world. It means bringing to the world, in the situations in which you find yourselves, the word of God that is to be heard. It is this that truly characterizes secular life: knowing how to say that word that God has to say to the world. Where ‘to say’ does not mean so much ‘to speak’ as ‘to act.’ We say what God wants to say to the

¹⁰ Perfectae Caritatis, 11

¹¹ Dizionario Istituti di Perfezione, 109

¹² Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Consecration and Secularity*. Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Secular Institutes, 4 June 2017, n. 2

¹³ D.I.P, 109

¹⁴ Idem, 110

world, acting in the world.”¹⁵ *“Do not be discouraged: you are part of that poor Church and that goes out which I dream of! And don’t forget: be revolutionaries!”*¹⁶

d. Formation with Pauline colour

The style of Paul and Alberione as expression and manifestation of the Pauline colour, of the Pauline spirit, must characterize our formative itineraries.

In the meantime, let us understand each other and let us clarify what we mean by “Pauline colour, Pauline spirit ...” Different terms that want to say the same thing, but that must be filled with substance, with contents so that they do not remain as simple slogans.

*“If they ask us what the Pauline spirit is, we must know how to respond that it is living in Jesus Christ as presented by Saint Paul. Pauline life is this: to live in the Church and in Christ, following the example of Saint Paul, under the protection of Saint Paul. He formed his disciples and his own form conformed to the original form which is Christ himself.”*¹⁷

Style is to be understood as my personal way of being in the daily reality that I live, made of gestures, relationships, choices. Style finds its roots and its meaning in the values that the person has made his/her own and they are their expression, external manifestation.

¹⁵ Message of Pope Francis to the participants in the Italian Conference of Secular Institutes, 23 October 2017.

¹⁶ Audience of Pope Francis to the participants in the meeting promoted by the Italian Conference of Secular Institutes, 10 May 2014.

¹⁷ ArGe/D, 89, 71

SECOND PART — GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ELABORATING A FORMATION *ITER*

These general guidelines have a short formulation and are not developed in all their diversity and richness because the cultures of the various nation and the levels of formation of the members are diverse. It pertains to every Delegate to prepare the Formation *Iter* based on these general guidelines. The General Director of the Aggregated Institutes could include in “what has been gathered” from the whole formation, the material which each Delegate comes out with or finds in his researches/studies that he believes is useful and which others may find of value.

a. Our charisma and its history

1. Our identity: consecration with the profession of vows in secularity, Aggregated to the Society of St. Paul and as an integral part of the mission of the Pauline Family.
2. Our mission: to be ferment, leaven within the social reality with the spirit of Paul and Alberione in the culture of Communication
3. Our belonging
 - i. To humanity of today
 - ii. To the Church
 - iii. To the Pauline Family

b. Objectives of the Pauline formation

From Saint Paul we take the objectives of our Pauline formation, which are not to be understood as “separate,” but “united, intertwined” with each other.

- h) The universality of Paul and Alberione
 - Paul and Alberione have a broad (= horizontal) and profound (= vertical) vision of man, reality and the world. Think, see, design big.
- i) Sent to the Gentiles
 - The Pauline always goes out
 - He/she turns to the Gentiles of today: the poor of today

Style is a way of behaving that “involves many small things.” *“The ‘Christian difference’ must never be separated from the style of communication and practice: ... because style is as important as the content of the message, especially for us Christians. It is significant that in the Gospels one finds in the mouth of Jesus a greater insistence on style than on the message, which is always concise and precise: “Do not act like hypocrites” (Mt 6:2,5,16) “Go like sheep among wolves” (Mt 10:16) “Learn from me for I am meek and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29)*

Yes, the style with which the Christian is in the company of men is decisive: faith itself depends on it, because one cannot proclaim a Jesus who tells of God in meekness, in humility, in mercy, and do it with arrogant style, with strong tones or even with attitudes that belong to the worldly militancy! ... Listening to the Gospel as good or bad communication, and therefore good or bad news, depends on the style of Christians in the world.”¹⁸

The style of Saint Paul finds its example and origin in our models: Paul and Alberione. To describe the style of Paul and Alberione, it is necessary to refer to their internal motivations and beliefs that have generated behaviours and attitudes that we admire today and to which we would like to configure ourselves.

The style of Paul and Alberione can be summarized in “passion for God, passion for man.”¹⁹

To deepen further the spirit and style of Paul and Alberione, that has generated subsequent and coherent behaviours, we are presenting some references that will help our understanding and assimilation so that we too can follow in their footsteps and be “Paul alive today”

¹⁸ Enzo Bianchi, *Christian Non-conformism*, Ed Qiqajon, pp. 17-19

¹⁹ Cf. 1 Cor 9:16-27; 2 Cor 6:1-10; 2 Cor 11:28-29

and “Children of Alberione.” The style of Paul and Alberione has, among others, these characteristics:

a) The *kenosis* of Christ, Paul and Alberione:²⁰

- Paul and Alberione have a precise evaluation of themselves, of their weaknesses and qualities/gifts, of their call; they have a strong Christian identity, adult and uncompromising (with a solid spine) which manifests itself in a clear coherence of life: the consciousness of what one really is, in strengths and weaknesses, is part of the Pauline style that transforms itself:
 - i. one bends down and adapts to every situation and every person;
 - ii. is not arrogant but creates bridges with humility and patience, ready to listen, possibly revise one’s positions, ready to give thanks;
 - iii. dialogues with all: friends, enemies, competitors, opponents.

b) The solicitude and the “urgencies” of Paul and Alberione

- The Pauline is one who gets his/her hands dirty, does not stay out of the struggle or exonerates himself/herself from work and from undertakings, even the most humble, manual ones.
- He/she never stands still, is quiet, peaceful, because he/she is carried away by concern for man and passion for Christ. Nonetheless, he/she is serene, confident and joyful because: *“Scio cui credidi et certus sum ...”*
- He/she is moved by anxiety and concern for souls to be saved; *Caritas Cristi urget nos: woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.*

²⁰ Cf. Phil 2:1-11; 1 Cor 4:9-16

c) The “*totalism*” (and integrality) of Alberione and Paul: “the total Christ to man, the total man to Christ”; “... I made myself everything to everyone in order to...”

- He/she takes responsibility of the human person, of all men and women, and their unceasing search and anxiety.

d) Joy: “be glad ...”²¹

- He/she has always a positive and proactive vision of things, of reality, of situations, of persons.

e) The goal, the reward and working by objectives:²²

- He/she does not waste time – giving importance to time.
- He/she wastes nothing – giving weight and value to everything.

f) We form one body:²³

- Teamwork – Working in a team²⁴
- Creates communion, creates relationships

g) Charity:²⁵

- The Pauline is not a judge but a collaborator, lover and “builder” of unity against any division;
- Uses clean language, not offensive, but true;
- Always seeks the best, excellence, perfection in everything, from small to big things.

²¹ Cf. Rom 12:12; 2 Cor 6:10; Phil 3:1—4:4; 1 Tit 5:16

²² Cf. Phil 3:12-16; 1 Cor 9:24ff

²³ Cf. 1 Cor 12:12-31

²⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 12:12ff; 1 Cor 14:1ff

²⁵ Cf. Rom 12:9; 13:10; 1 Cor 13:1ff, 16:14; Eph 4:15; Col 3:14