

***BROTHERS OF THE CHURCH:  
A UNIQUE CALL FOR A PROPHETIC MISSION***

**GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION  
OF RELIGIOUS BROTHERS  
IN MIXED INSTITUTES**

**CREATED BY COLLABORATORS  
OF THE**

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***CONFERENCE OF MAJOR SUPERIORS OF MEN***

***NATIONAL RELIGIOUS VOCATION CONFERENCE***

***RELIGIOUS BROTHERS CONFERENCE***

***RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE***

*Dedicated to all Religious Brothers in the Church - past - present - future,  
who by their very person embody the prophetic message of Jesus as Brother.*

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## ***BROTHERS OF THE CHURCH: A UNIQUE CALL FOR A PROPHETIC MISSION***

### **GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION OF TEMPORARY PROFESSED RELIGIOUS BROTHERS IN MIXED INSTITUTES**

From Jesus' love for the world and its people, Religious Brothers are called to embody the prophetic memory of Jesus as Brother to all people and all ages. The mission of Religious Brothers resonates the announcement of evangelization: every person is worthy of respect and every person has access to the unlimited love of God. Religious Brothers are called to open their hearts. They are called to be healing and hope for those who are sick, broken, and uneducated. Religious Brothers gather the lost, the abandoned, and the marginalized so that together as community, they might experience home and God.

Brothers of the Church, impelled with the power and grace of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Charity,<sup>1</sup> "go forth into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation" (Mk 16:15). As witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which crowns human history in God's design (*Vita Consecrata*, No. 46),<sup>2</sup> Brothers freely bring to the world the gifts of their presence and their lives vowed to the mission and charism of their Institutes. The greatest gift that Brothers are privileged to bring to others is the person of Jesus made flesh in each of them. This is the unique and treasured role that our Institutes serve in the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith (NETF)*.<sup>3</sup>

Inspired by the recent, historic Vatican document, *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*,<sup>4</sup> we offer some Guidelines that may help resolve some of the disparity that exists in mixed Institutes between the formation of the Religious Brothers and the formation of future priest members. The formation of future priest members follows a clear and comprehensive *Program for Priestly Formation*. In many instances the formation of Religious Brothers does not follow such a clear program. Often Religious Brothers are not accompanied in temporary profession and are left to their own initiative and creativity. This often results in unaccompanied and individual formation programs. This kind of approach to their formation may easily lead to distraction from their full participation in community life. In such circumstances Religious Brothers have difficulty often with their vowed commitment and their witness of their charism.

To be admitted to perpetual profession in mixed Institutes, each Religious Brother in formation should be accompanied and be required to articulate and then demonstrate the mission of the Institute in community life and ministry. Transparency in their life and ministry should be evident both their Institute's charism and their mission. That same clarity and commitment should be also

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI (2007). The Sacrament of Charity (Sacramentum Caritatis), Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

<sup>2</sup> John Paul II. (1996). Vita Consecrata. Washington: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

<sup>3</sup> Tenth General Ordinary Synod of Bishops. (2012). The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. Rome: The Vatican.

<sup>4</sup> Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (2015). Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church. Rome: The Congregation.

expected of future priest members. Every professed member of the Institute is empowered with that charism and mission and assumes responsibility for its continuing vitality in the Church now and into the future.

Changes in the formation of Religious Brothers in mixed Institutes may require renewal of an Institute. One part of the Institute cannot be renewed in isolation from the other parts. New vocations are in our Church today. There are men seeking a life of prayer, a common life and service to others, committed to engaging the culture and evangelizing it. They are asking to be formed in the vision of the founders of their Institutes.

Indeed, the task before each of us is daunting, but our focus in this effort must keep in sight what we are called to be as Religious Brothers in the Church. We are to be prophetic witnesses to the Gospel. Each of us is called to be a dynamic source of energy, enkindling the faith of entire Christian communities (*NETF, No. 114*).<sup>11</sup> As we read in *Vita Consecrata*:

*You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things (No. 110).*<sup>12</sup>

What follows is a contribution to your Institute's guidelines for Formation of Religious Brothers in Mixed Institutes.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, No. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, No. 110.

## ***Guidelines for Formation of Temporary Professed Religious Brothers in Mixed Institutes***

### **I. *What the Church prescribes and understands as the significance of Temporary Profession***

1. After first profession in each Institute, the formation of temporary professed members is to be continued. Consequently they are able to lead more fully the proper life of the Institute and its mission. First profession begins a new phase of formation, which will be supported by the stability derived from profession.
2. Proper law of the Institute must define the program and its duration for temporary professed who will be Religious Brothers. Such law keeps in mind the needs of the Church, the circumstances of members, and the purpose and character of the Institute.
3. The formation of temporary professed is to be systematic, spiritual, apostolic, and doctrinal. It should be practical and adapted to the capacity of the members. Such formation can lead to appropriate degrees, both ecclesiastical and civil. During the time of temporary formation, duties and ministries which would impede formation are not to be assigned to members.
4. The goal of this stage of temporary profession attempts to facilitate young religious to make progress with a view toward perpetual profession (or its equivalence).

### **II. *The content and means of formation***

1. The Institute is responsible for providing the organization and duration of the temporary professed program. The formation of newly-professed Brothers systematically addresses the spiritual, apostolic, and doctrinal aspects of religious life within the specific Institute. That formation will provide the temporary professed with vigorous formational communities and competent formators in those communities.
2. The temporary professed, as all religious in the Institute, must recognize and experience the practical importance of community to their witness as religious. They attempt in these initial experiences of community: to learn to respect differences between others in community and to grow in their ownership and responsibility for the community. Superiors will specifically designate one member responsible for the formation of the temporarily professed in that community.
3. Temporary professed must be formed as religious in programs that will prepare them for the contemporary world and the charism and mission of the Institute. These programs must make necessary adaptations according to individuals, places, and times. In the programs of studies for temporary professed, special attention is given to biblical, dogmatic, spiritual, and pastoral theology. In addition, particular time is given to reflection for deepening a doctrinal understanding of consecrated life and the charism of the Institute.

4. The program should provide a basic philosophical formation that will equip temporary professed with a foundation to understand and contribute to the debated questions of our time. Many in the Church will look to Religious Brothers for balanced approaches to the integration of faith and culture.
5. The program of theological studies should be judiciously chosen for the particular needs of the Religious Brother and his future ministry. This theological formation should not mimic the courses required for future priest members of the Institute.
6. Temporary professed require an apostolic commitment that must be in keeping with the charism of their Institute, as well as the aptitudes and aspirations of the individuals.
7. When temporary professed are sent to study, they are sent to prepare for a ministry that will respond to the needs of the Church and the particular Institute. The individual should be encouraged to maximize his gifts and his aptitudes for ministry.
8. Each temporary professed is asked to seek a spiritual director. These directors will assist the young religious to discern God's action in their lives, to monitor the daily practice of their prayer, and to develop the practice of recognizing God's regular design in their lives. These spiritual directors may be from the person's own Institute or outside of it.
9. Spiritual Direction should continue for the rest of their lives as religious.
10. Many Institutes provide for a more intense period of prayer and preparation prior to perpetual profession.

### **III. *Pillars of Formation for the Temporary Professed***

While some aspects of temporary professed formation are particular to Institutes, Directors of Formation generally build from the following pillars:

#### ***Human Formation***

- Human formation may be the single most important area of development that both predicts and enables a commitment to life in the community. This formation touches emotions, social skills, and maturation. Without a healthy foundation, efforts to integrate a Brother into community life will not be possible.
- Human formation should address such essentials as communication skill, human sexuality, appropriate levels of self-disclosure, skills for conflict resolution, decision-making for the common good, dealing with difficult personalities, and other topics important for human growth and community living.
- Healthy human sexuality in terms of the celibate commitment needs to be incorporated into a thorough program of integration. This program should promote acceptance of one's sexual identity and address issues of intimacy.
- The program of human formation presents models of behavior that enable effective functioning in the mission and avoids patterns of activities which are destructive or detrimental to perseverance or continued personal development.
- A thorough and on-going education program will include: ethical reasoning, awareness of boundary issues, formation of safe environments for coworkers and those we serve in ministry, proper use of technology for relaxation, and current requirements for protecting children and vulnerable adults.

#### ***Theological Formation***

- Adult learning methodologies should be the norm.
- As public ministers of the Church, part of the Brothers' intellectual and apostolic formation consists of theological studies for greater understanding of the faith and for witnessing and speaking as believers.
- Care should be taken to avoid any semblance of clericalizing the Brother by insisting on a theological program that is a seminary curriculum.

### ***Pastoral Formation***

- Each Institute knows its particular mission, so temporary professed Brothers are assigned pastoral activities in keeping with that mission.
- Well-trained professionals offer formation for pastoral service. This formation includes a faith-reflection component that enables the Brother to assess his strengths and weaknesses, to affirm his gifts and contributions, and to align his goals with the mission of the Institute and the Church.
- The goal of pastoral formation is to enforce the significance of the Brother in advancing the mission of the Institute.
- Through the varied forms of pastoral service and thoughtful, patient mentoring, the Brother learns to identify with the charism and traditions of the Institute and to assess how he might best contribute to the mission.

### ***Charism Formation***

- Formation for charism means the ability to identify the lived expressions of the Spirit in the current settings of the Institute. This formation allows the temporary professed to mine documents expressive of the charism, to learn more of the oral history from members of the Institute, and to develop an ability to translate the charism into modern expression that is readily understandable to his peers and to the Church.
- Continuing formation in the charism is for the sake of ever-growing ownership of that charism and engagement with other members in the evolution of the Institute's charism.
- Each Institute is one expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the mission of Christ. No one Institute exhausts all aspects of the Spirit's gifts to the Church. Care should be taken to articulate a meaningful curriculum based on the foundational sources of the Institute.

### ***Religious Life Formation***

- Formation for religious life should continue to identify both the common elements in consecrated life and apostolic commitment, as well as the distinctive characteristics within a particular Institute. This same formation ought to bring about exchange with men and women religious from other spectra of religious Institutes in the Church.
- The rationale for religious life formation is to provide growth of the life of Christian discipleship expressed in a particular way in community and for mission.

- Care should be taken to seek excellent presenters and to provide engaging experiences which build mutual respect for other traditions and a confirmation of the choice for one's own Institute.

### ***Intellectual Formation***

- Each Institute should articulate how its vision and mission is best matched to the skills and gifts of its members. The Brother comes to see how he understands himself now and how he could journey with the Institute to contribute to its witness and its flourishing.
- Intellectual formation respects the real abilities and gifts of any individual and explicitly invites the Brother to contribute positively to the mission of the Institute. Individual freedom and common witness must converge in the individual's life. It is then both the Institute and the Brother making a deliberate investment for training or studies.
- Intellectual formation is for the sake of fully embracing this vocation as a contribution to the internal life of the Institute and its external witness in ministry.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

- Each Institute expresses how its members live a spiritual vibrancy that builds up both the individual and the communion of all its members.
- Spiritual formation involves faith-sharing and the personal and communal disciplines which contribute to perseverance, peace, and happiness within the life of the Institute. Each community of the Institute prays together daily. They understand prayer as the nourishing development of their relationship with God and witness of their fraternal life.
- Spiritual formation is for the sake of communion which witnesses to the experience of God's grace in the lives of the members.
- Care should be taken to allow the real direction of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the men in formation, as they own the traditions of the Institute, respect the individual members, and work together towards their sanctification.

## SUMMARY

They do not come into this world alone. They do not come to Jesus alone. They seek mercy as they ask for mercy when they profess their vows. They do not go alone to the peripheries of human life to bring Jesus to the lost, the least and the last among us. They come together as men of faith and witnesses of hope. These are men called to religious life as Brothers of the Church.

In this prophetic mission, as Brothers of the Church, let us come to Jesus, let us rest, let us contemplate the mystery unfolding in our midst. Let us be renewed; let us catch the fire of the New Evangelization, and then let us be open to the surprises that Jesus has planned for us since before time began. Amen!

## EDITORS

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### **Prayer for Religious Brothers Day**

Feast of St. Joseph the Worker – May 1<sup>st</sup>

God of mercy and compassion, we thank you for the extraordinary life, witness, and ministry of Religious Brothers in our Church.

We ask you to deepen our appreciation of Religious Brothers, their congregational charisms, and their commitment to vowed community life.

Strengthened by our baptismal call to holiness, inspire us to invite men to consider religious life as a Religious Brother.

Grant all Religious Brothers the grace and perseverance they need to proclaim your Holy Word for the life of our Church and our world.

Amen.