

PLAN OF AUGUSTINIAN FORMATION

*Ratio Institutionis
Ordinis Sancti Augustini*



Ordo Sancti Augustini

PUBBLICAZIONI AGOSTINIANE
ROMA

17

Foreword

The General Council and I are happy to present the *Ratio Institutionis* approved at the Ordinary General Chapter 2019 in Rome. This document is a result of much planning and preparation, and we are grateful to all who participated in the research, conversations, online virtual fora, regional workshops, international congresses, formation house meetings, local house chapters, and Intermediate and Ordinary General Chapters. The active participation of so many brothers indicates the importance of the theme of this document. It is the result of a collaborative effort of the whole Order and demonstrates that we consider initial formation a priority in our Augustinian community life.

This *Plan of Augustinian Initial Formation* is to be used as a tool to assist our members who participate in all stages of initial formation. The intention of updating and publishing this document is to respond to the changing and developing realities in our houses of formation, our church and our world while remaining faithful to our rich Augustinian tradition and the directives of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*.

We present this *Ratio Institutionis* as a general plan which is supported by the sources we share in common. Those sources include: Sacred Scripture, the Rule and writings of St. Augustine, the Constitutions of the Order, sources from our Augustinian written and living tradition, and universal Church documents. Additionally, throughout this *Ratio Institutionis*, reference is made to the vital importance of the *Particular Plan* of formation for each circumscription. This *Ratio Institutionis* offers a general plan as a foundation upon which the *Particular Plans* can be formulated and built. These *Particular Plans* of formation are to give attention to and respond to the details and circumstances that may affect the plan of formation on a local, regional or federation level. We encourage the major superiors and those involved directly in initial formation of each circumscription to see that the formulation of the *Particular Plan* of formation be treated as a priority with serious study.

Although the topic of ongoing formation is also important in our Augustinian community, this document focuses mainly on the stages of initial formation. Ongoing formation plans should be treated in a more detailed and practical way in the *Particular Plans* of the circumscriptions.

We hope that with this *Ratio Institutionis* we may continue to journey as brothers, *one in mind and heart on our way to God*, while highlighting the importance of accompanying our newest members as they discover the lessons of interiority from Christ, our inner teacher, and as they experience the joy that comes from living a prophetic life in community, announcing the Gospel of salvation to the world in which we live.

Fraternally,

Alejandro Moral Antón
Prior General O.S.A.
3 February 2020
Memorial of Bl. Stephen Bellesini, O.S.A.

*The main purpose for you having come together
is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God
in oneness of mind and heart. (Rule of St. Augustine 1)*

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose of This Plan

1. The *Rule of St. Augustine*, the principal document of our spirituality,¹ prescribes that our main purpose in living together *is to live harmoniously... intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart.*² In order to better assist those who seek to commit themselves to the Augustinian way of consecrated life and for those who facilitate the ministry of initial formation, this *Plan of Augustinian Formation* has been established. This plan was developed in response to the determination of the General Chapter of 1989 and subsequently approved by the Ordinary General Chapter of 1995. The Ordinary General Chapter of 2007, which had as its theme *The Renewal of Augustinian Life*, asserted that renewal within the Order begins with formation, and underscored the important connection between the two moments of formation necessary in the life of every friar - initial and ongoing. Five determinations were issued in the *Documents and Decisions* of the Chapter³ which were designed to give formation and its related area, vocational promotion, special attention and support. Among these, it called for a program of formation for formators which was conducted between May 2010 and April 2011 via the Order's on-line web page, and which concluded with a week-long Congress held in Cascia, Italy, in July 2011. The content of the distance learning program, which was organized by the International Commission for Initial Formation, followed the methodology of the Order's 1995 *Plan of Augustinian Formation*. Friars from nearly every circumscription participated in the course and many of these took part in the concluding Congress. In response to the on-line course and the Congress in Cascia, a *Supplement to the Plan of Augustinian Formation* was developed and presented to the General Chapter of 2013. The *Supplement* was approved at that Chapter with a recommendation to the General Council to make a complete revision of the *Ratio Institutionis*. The revision was presented to the Intermediate General Chapter of 2016 and was approved as a draft to be distributed to the formation houses for further examination. It was reviewed and edited through an on-line blog and forum, regional workshops and an international congress for formators in Rome, in July 2018. The edited draft was approved by the Ordinary General Chapter of 2019. The term, *Ratio Institutionis*, comes from the directives of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, and is supported in Canon Law.⁴

2. This plan is a compilation of documents from the Magisterium of the Church, the Constitutions of the Order, writings of St. Augustine, and from experts in theology, anthropology, sociology, human development and formation of Religious and Consecrated life. It will explore and build upon the main pillars of initial formation presented by His Holiness, Pope Francis, in his meeting with Major Religious Superiors of men in November 2013.⁵ Throughout this plan emphasis will be placed on the

¹ *Const.* 16.

² *reg.* I, 3.

³ See *CGO* 2007, P8-P12.

⁴ See *VC* 68; *CIC* 659.

⁵ See *Wake Up the World, A Conversation with Pope Francis about Religious Life*, Antonio Spadaro. (original text in Italian: *Svegliate il Mondo*, Civiltà Cattolica 2014 I 3-17) Translated into English by Fr. Donald Malari S.J.

spiritual, intellectual, communitarian, apostolic, psychological and social dimensions of Augustinian initial formation. *No aspect of the human person is to be neglected, but due order is to be observed among those things which are of value.*⁶ This plan will serve as a means of promoting greater unity of spirit and of ideal regarding formation of candidates within the entire Order. It is necessary to point out, however, that all of this material is presented in a concise manner. Both serious study and adequate reflection will be necessary in order to reap the fullest benefit from it and properly apply it to particular, local circumstances.

3. The Order of St. Augustine enjoys a great spiritual wealth, not only because of its heritage and tradition, but also because of the rich, cultural diversity of its members. This plan wishes to respect that diversity. In fact, in a certain way, this plan is also the fruit of that diversity, for the input and experience of Augustinians throughout the world has contributed to its development. Bearing in mind, moreover, that all formation must be carried out in the distinct circumstances of individual nations, provinces and other jurisdictions of the Order, the general guidelines proposed here will have to be supplemented by a *Particular Plan of Formation*,⁷ to be developed in each jurisdiction. These *Particular Plans* will, quite naturally, take into account the social, cultural, ethnic, and ecclesial circumstances of the individual circumscriptions. It is important to include in the *Particular Plan*, a program for ongoing formation for the friars who have completed the initial stages of formation. This ongoing formation program is to include general programs for all friars and also programs for those in specific categories, for example, a) those who are in their first five to ten years of ministry after initial formation, b) friars up to age 65, c) friars who are 65 years old and older.

2. To Whom This Plan is Directed

4. The *Plan* is intended especially for Major Superiors, formation personnel and teams, those who collaborate with them at all levels, and those candidates in the initial stages of formation. Our *Constitutions* remind us, however, that *a true and complete formation of our candidates cannot be suitably carried out without the attentive and untiring cooperation of the entire Augustinian family.*⁸ Therefore, all of us are to be mindful of how important our own exemplary life is in affirming those in initial formation in the vocation they have freely embraced in response to God's personal call.⁹

3. An Augustinian Anthropological view of Formation

5. A *Plan of Augustinian Formation*, inspired by the thought and the spirituality of St. Augustine, has to begin with a reformulation of the term: more than speaking about formation, we need to speak of re-formation or renewal. According to St. Augustine, in fact, the human was originally formed by God, it was deformed by sin and has to be re-formed by God in Christ.¹⁰ God made us to live in communion with him (*fecisti nos ad Te*)¹¹, that is, to be able to reach him with a natural tendency for life, truth and love, and to be in communion with our neighbor. With sin, we have turned in on ourselves and toward earthly and temporal goods, distancing ourselves from God and our neighbor. Augustine teaches that we are born with concupiscence, that is, disordered *amor sui*. The spiritual life consists of the diminishment of this concupiscence and growth in the love of Christ. Using Pauline

⁶ *Const.* 193.

⁷ See *Const.* 190.

⁸ *Const.* 212.

⁹ See *Const.* 186-187.

¹⁰ See *en. Ps.* 65, 4.

¹¹ *conf.* I, 1, 1.

language, we can say: *we have to take off the old self and put on the new*,¹² passing from a carnal to a spiritual condition as a new person guided by the Spirit.

Another aspect to consider is that we cannot complete this renewal by ourselves: it is the work of God through Jesus Christ in the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹³ That renewal can happen only by following Jesus Christ¹⁴ and relying not on ourselves but on the grace of God, for which we never tire of asking. In summary, the foundation of a true formation requires the humility to recognize the truth that we are born sinners, and that we need God to heal and to renew us. Without this double understanding, born from faith, there cannot be conversion or renewal.

6. A true formation therefore, puts Christ at the center, not the individual. Christ is the model for the person who must try to achieve to live the dual relationship of son towards the Father, and neighbor towards neighbor. Christ, in fact, lived in gratitude to the Father, from whom he received everything, and lived for the Father, becoming obedient until death, to glorify him by giving him many adopted children. Christ, then, being rich and immortal, became poor and mortal, to share the human condition in order to offer us the possibility to become like him, children of God and coheirs of his glory.¹⁵ A Christian is called to make his own, the attitude of Christ. One arrives at this by living in contemplation of the mystery of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, based on a faithful and constant listening of the Word of God.

7. Contemplation of the mystery of Christ primarily grows in loving and in following him. Living in such a way leads us to do what is good, not as servants under the law, but as free men under grace,¹⁶ not by coercion but in the joy of true interior freedom. Contemplation of the mystery of Christ must lead us to a more profound understanding and always fuller sharing in the design of God to unite all people in Christ. Formation has to educate us and make us feel and live as one unique body, the Church, of which Christ is the Head. On the one hand, it signifies that the members live when they remain united to the Head and from him receive life with the gift of his Spirit. It is not possible to live separated from Christ, like a branch separated from the vine. On the other hand, to be a member of the body of Christ means that no one lives for one's self, thinking only of one's self and personal interests; Christ's interests have to be placed before personal interests, thinking of the good of the brothers, sharing all goods, avoiding division and following the peace of unity.¹⁷ We must convince ourselves with St. Augustine, that the most grave crime that we can commit is that of dividing the Church and that the religious community is called to give witness that it is possible, if one remains united to God, to live in unity and in fraternal peace.¹⁸

8. The primary aim, then, of Christian formation is that of union with Christ, here and hereafter. Consecrated religious seek to achieve this common goal through the profession of the evangelical counsels.¹⁹ As Augustinians, when we seek this goal through faithfully living our religious profession, *our profession bears witness to the very divine life of the Blessed Trinity. Our communion of life is modelled after the mutual love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, making the Augustinian*

¹² *Eph* 4:22-24.

¹³ See *Rom* 5:5.

¹⁴ See *PC* 2a.

¹⁵ See *Phil* 2:6-11.

¹⁶ See *reg.* VIII.

¹⁷ See *ep. Io. tr.* 9,11.

¹⁸ See *ser.* 398, 4.

¹⁹ See *PC* 1.

community a true “school of charity”.²⁰ When we faithfully correspond to our profession, we appear as a prophetic sign to the entire people of God.²¹

9. Augustinian formation not only seeks to strengthen our baptismal commitment and develop the following of Christ on the path of Consecrated life, but seeks to do so specifically according to our Augustinian charism, which has as a point of reference both the example and teaching of St. Augustine and builds upon a sound Augustinian tradition. By that, the direction given to the Order by the Church will be taken into account, especially the time of our initial juridical existence (1244 and 1256) providing special attention to the knowledge of our history and the main figures of Augustinian spirituality. This tradition continues to contribute to a communal and personal Augustinian identity in the lives of Augustinians who give living testimony as members of Christ’s body.

10. Our Augustinian identity will become especially evident when we follow Augustine in these specific ways:

- a) in his clear emphasis on the continuous need to search for God by means of a deep interior life²² and a practical love of neighbor;²³
- b) in his love for the truth, which requires sincere dedication to study;²⁴
- c) in the urgency he communicates to his followers to pursue wholeheartedly their holy undertaking of a chaste life in community,²⁵
- d) in keeping with the model of the Jerusalem community;²⁶
- e) and in his deep faith, special love, and generous service to the Church as mother.²⁷

This Augustinian identity may be summed up as the search for God, through a community established in love, in which we share our faith and life, and from which a wholehearted service to the Church and the world receives its emphasis and encouragement.

11. Formation, then, takes place throughout one's lifetime. Special and focused attention must be given in the stages of initial formation. At all times, however, the various dimensions of our lives: as human beings, as Christians, as Augustinians, and as apostolic ministers must be seen as opportunities for ongoing formation.

- a) As *human beings*: Proper care must be given to good bodily health, to an adequate moral, intellectual, emotional, psychological and spiritual development, to the need for continuing personal relationships with family and friends, and to extending one's social awareness in a broader fashion.
- b) As *Christians*: While Christian growth presupposes human growth, it also demands the ongoing development of one's place in the life of the total Christ, *Cristus totus*.²⁸ In Augustine's thought, this total Christ is primarily the Church, but it also extends to all humans through God's self-manifestation in the incarnation.²⁹ A religious vocation is awakened within the Church and is nurtured and lived in the Church through faith, prayer and good works.³⁰

²⁰ *trin.* 8.8.12; *en. Ps.* 132.12; Paulus PP. VI *Oratio ad Patres Capitulares* CGO 1971, Acta Ord. 16 (1971) 91*-94*.

²¹ *Const.* 55. See *VC* 84-92.

²² See *Const.* 22-24, 31.

²³ See *Const.* 35-39.

²⁴ See *Const.* 14, 123-143.

²⁵ See *Const.* 61-63.

²⁶ See *Acts* 2: 42-47; *ser.* 355,2; *en. Ps.* 99,11; et al.

²⁷ See *Const.* 54.

²⁸ See *en. Ps.* 17.2; 26.II.2; 30.II.1.3; 54.3; 56.1; 74.5; 100.3; 132.7; 138.2.

²⁹ See *ep. Io. tr.* 1,2; *ser.* 341,1,1.

³⁰ See *Const.* 109.

c) As *Augustinians*: Augustinian growth takes place, not only within the geographic reality of a particular region of the Order, but also within the community of the whole Order.³¹ A true Augustinian identity will be established by a lived experience of Augustinian spirituality, which will be delineated more specifically in the following sections of this plan, and especially in Part III.

d) As *apostolic ministers*: Availability for service to the Church constitutes one of the essential characteristics of Augustinian spirituality.³² The apostolate is *an integral part of our religious life*, within which we find *an expression of and an increase in the love of Christ*.³³ Growth as apostolic ministers in the Order demands formation in understanding that, *even though apostolic works are assigned to individuals, they are to be looked upon as committed to the community*.³⁴ Furthermore, since the apostolate embraces our entire life, it goes well beyond mere activity, and includes both common and personal prayer, as well as study.³⁵ Formation to the apostolate must also in a special way take into serious consideration the Order's commitment to the poor and its concerns for social justice.³⁶

12. To help us prepare for the new millennium, in the General Chapter of 1989, the Order adopted a clear stance regarding vocation promotion and the formation of our membership. This emphasis was repeated in the General Chapters of 1995, 2001, 2007 and 2013. Saint Pope John Paul II emphasized time and again the modern world's need to accept the challenges of our world through a new evangelization,³⁷ in which the Church's social teaching,³⁸ as well as the principle of solidarity as a concern for the common good of all,³⁹ must play a greater role. Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, throughout his papacy, frequently relied on the thoughts and words of Augustine to support the message he wanted to deliver in his sermons, letters and apostolic exhortations.⁴⁰ And at the General Chapter of 2013, Pope Francis, offered the entire Order an opportunity to reflect on three kinds of Augustinian restlessness: a) the restlessness of spiritual seeking; b) the restlessness of the encounter with God; c) the restlessness of love.⁴¹ We have a valuable treasure in that, as Augustinians, we have St. Augustine as a guide. This *Plan of Augustinian Formation* will rely upon this treasure and our tradition to shape and direct the process of initiating candidates into our way of life and forming them in our distinctive charism.

4. Basic Principles of an Augustinian Approach to Formation

13. Given that the manner in which we accomplish things can be just as important as what we seek to attain, the growth and development spoken of above will become better capable of achievement when some basic Augustinian principles are kept in mind:

a) The whole of formation should be carried out in a community atmosphere which is both inviting and challenging.

³¹ See *Const.* 8.

³² See *Const.* 35.

³³ *Const.* 37.

³⁴ *Const.* 149.

³⁵ See *Const.* 144.

³⁶ See *Const.* 35.

³⁷ See *RM* 2.

³⁸ See *CA* 5.

³⁹ See *CA* 10, *CL* 42.

⁴⁰ See Homily of Benedict XVI at the tomb of St. Augustine in Pavia April 22, 2007; Pope Benedict XVI also dedicated five weekly papal audiences January – February 2008, to the theme of St. Augustine.

⁴¹ See CGO 2013.

- b) While respect for the person is highlighted in the *Rule*, this respect needs to be balanced by a concern for the common good.⁴² For the community is the place of our common encounter with God, an encounter which is ever better realized the more we strive to live in unity and harmony.⁴³
- c) A strong community prayer life, centered on the daily celebration of the Eucharist, must be enriched by the efforts of each person to achieve a deep interior life.⁴⁴ Ample time is also to be provided for prayer, study, dialogue, recreation, and the sharing of faith and apostolic experiences.
- d) Love for God and for the Church, while expressing itself in concrete works in keeping with local ecclesial needs, must begin in the community itself, where this love will show itself above all in a practical concern and love for one's brothers.⁴⁵

5. Resources for Formation

14. The resources that deal with religious formation are abundant. The Sacred Scriptures themselves and the teachings of the Church, especially as these latter are contained in the Second Vatican Council and in post-Conciliar documents, offer a wealth of material dealing with formation. But for us special attention must also be given to Augustinian sources: the writings of Augustine, particularly those concerning religious life; writings about Augustine which illustrate his thought and example; the history of the Order; the *Constitutions* of the Order; Augustinian authors, books and articles dealing with our spirituality and tradition. A select number of these writings are indicated in the Bibliography provided on the website of the Institute of Augustinian Spirituality. Other writings of this nature, which are available in different nations and languages, are to be added in the *Particular Plan of Formation* for each circumscription.

⁴² See *reg.* V, 31.

⁴³ See *reg.* I; *en. Ps.* 132.

⁴⁴ See *Const.* 31, 80-107.

⁴⁵ See *reg.* V, 31; *Const.* 5-7.

*All the baptized, as living members united into the one People of God,
and forming the one Body of Christ under one head,
must contribute continuously to the growth and sanctification
of the Church according to each one's mission. (Constitutions 187)*

PART II: THE AGENTS OF FORMATION

1. The Trinity, the agent of formation *par excellence*¹

15. The divine relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a dynamic relationship of love.² Formation in an Augustinian community is rooted in this dynamic. All the relationships that are formed: among the candidates, the formators and the formation team, do indeed contribute to the holistic formation of the candidates in finding their beginning and their end in Love. The formation process, in all of its stages, is motivated by and takes shape within this reality. *Relationships between human beings throughout history cannot but be enriched by reference to this divine model.*³ Participation in this journey of transformation signifies that the candidate is never alone. God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, calls each candidate and faithfully grants to each one, in the depth of his being, the gift of Christ, who is both master and guide. Christ is the interior master in the formation process. Each candidate *must hold most firmly what he who is the interior teacher of the interior human being teaches.*⁴ This transformation in Christ, then, is the work of the Spirit. Its effect is a progressive growth in loving fidelity and generous response to that Love, which first inspires a candidate to join our way of life. Whatever the Father teaches, through Christ the interior teacher, is grace when received with a heart that is open to this transformation in Love. *For the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*⁵

2. Mary, Model of Discipleship

16. Mary, mother of Jesus, is a model of deep and enduring love. She was invited to follow an unprecedented path of discipleship: to be bearer, nurturer and counsellor of Jesus. From the very first step on her path of discipleship, Mary experienced the turmoil and challenge which is the lot of each disciple (*Lk 1:29-30*). She chose motherhood, offered her generous *fiat*, and persevered in discipleship to the cross and beyond it. *It means more for Mary to have been a disciple of Christ than to have been the mother of Christ...That is why Mary was blessed, because even before she gave him birth, she bore her teacher in her womb.*⁶ She chose consistently to become familiar with the challenge of following Jesus, to learn what God desired of her, and to accustom herself to a life of challenge. She is a disciple to whom we can turn for guidance and counsel.

For centuries she has been revered in our Order as Our Lady of Grace, Our Lady of Help, Our Mother of Consolation, and Our Mother of Good Counsel. On the path of formation, it is entirely fitting that we turn to her motherly wisdom and intercession, so that through her *integral faith, her firm hope, and her sincere love,*⁷ she may be our model of consecration in formation and throughout life.

¹ *VC* 66.

² See *trin.* IX, 2.

³ *CV* 54.

⁴ *ep.* 266.4.

⁵ *Rom* 5:5.

⁶ *ser* 72a, 7.

⁷ *Io ev. tr.* 13,12; See also *ser.* 191.

3. The Context in which Formation Develops

3.1. The Church

17. The Church is the work of the Holy Trinity and, in the likeness of the Trinity, a universal community of love.⁸ One of the main goals of our formation program is to prepare our *formandi* to be ministers in service to the Church. Our XIII century origins as an Order include a special relationship we have with the Holy See,⁹ and we have maintained that relationship throughout the centuries. Our Augustinian plan of formation includes many references from documents of the Universal Church regarding religious and apostolic life, and the formation of candidates for ordained ministry.¹⁰ Our *Constitutions* remind us that: *Community for an Augustinian is not limited to the house in which he lives, nor to the circumscription to which he belongs, because our family is the Order; as such the community and the friars will be at the service of the Universal Church.*¹¹ This universal Church gives existence to the religious life of its children, nourishes that life and cares for it with profound love. Our *Plan of Augustinian Formation* encourages programs, in each stage of formation, that recognize the relationship that each friar and each Augustinian community has with both the local and universal Church.

3.2. Cultural, Social and Human Context

18. Augustinian formation takes place in a particular socio-cultural context, which by itself exerts a considerable influence. *Culture is a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates; each generation passes on a whole series of ways of approaching different existential situations to the next generation, which must in turn reformulate it as it confronts its own challenges.*¹² Irrespective of what stage in formation one occupies, whether it be initial or ongoing, we are formed in and by our cultural environment, not apart from it. We must, therefore, learn to dialogue in a diverse religious-cultural setting with an attitude of openness and respect.¹³ It also requires us to be familiar with the constantly changing global situation of humankind,¹⁴ in its political, social, ecological, technological, and economic dimensions, so that we are capable of critically analyzing prevailing values from the perspective of the Gospel, and with an eye to the signs of the times.¹⁵

19. Candidates in our formation programs will be heirs of the human, social, spiritual, psycho-spiritual, cultural and academic environment in which they mature during their initial formation. They are to be helped to progress from merely receiving what is imparted to them,¹⁶ to becoming able to contribute to and enrich the cultural and academic environment of the Order itself, as well as of society in general, in fraternal cooperation with others. The tremendous changes in the world today¹⁷ and the problems of our modern civilization can in no way be mere side issues in formation.¹⁸ Some

⁸ See *PI* 23; *Io ev. tr.* 105,3; *Io ev. tr.* 9,8; *trin.* XV,6,10.

⁹ See *Const.* 3.

¹⁰ See Abbreviations and cited works page included in this *Ratio*.

¹¹ *Const.* 8.

¹² *EG* 122.

¹³ See *FR* 104.

¹⁴ See *CV* 21.

¹⁵ See *EG* 51.

¹⁶ See *mag.* 45.

¹⁷ See *CA* 22-29; *PP* 32.

¹⁸ See *CV* 15-16.

of these problems which must be faced are: relations between countries of the northern and southern hemispheres,¹⁹ the challenges of the New Evangelization,²⁰ ecological problems,²¹ the option for the poor,²² ministry with young people,²³ respect for different cultures,²⁴ the dignity of women,²⁵ and the new frontiers which face the Church and the Order.²⁶

20. Not only are we recipients of the culture in which we live, our lifestyle contributes something important to the culture that surrounds us. We witness to the truth that the human person cannot adequately understand himself or herself except in relationship to God.²⁷ God alone can satisfy the deepest hungers of the heart. In a cultural environment where the thrust towards self-realization as an end in itself is pervasive, our way of life proposes a contrary system of values and priorities. Religious life, through its particular charisms, proclaims in its way what other forms of the Christian life proclaim in another way, namely that human life, in all its dimensions, is fundamentally bound up with God's plan; we are co-creators in bringing about the Kingdom of justice, love and peace which Jesus inaugurated, and it is in the furthering of this project in ourselves and in our world that we find the deepest affirmation of our worth and dignity.²⁸

3.3. The Augustinian Order

21. The Augustinian Order possesses a great treasure in the life and works of Augustine, in the spiritual heritage of its saints and wisdom figures, its theologians and thinkers, mystics and martyrs, its exemplary religious, in various religious communities and local churches, of the past and present. The Order gladly offers this treasure to its candidates in formation, so that during their lifetime they can find in it an evangelical experience that is always ancient and always new.

22. Candidates are to be formed in such a way that they develop a fraternal love for their brothers in their circumscriptions and in the Order. Their formation must include a development of a mature love for their native culture, country, and peoples, and participate as well in the consciousness of belonging to an Order that, above and beyond juridical divisions, is committed to a universal mission.²⁹

23. The Assistants General are encouraged to organize interregional or international visits, meetings and courses, for formators and those in the initial stages of formation.³⁰ To create a more universal mentality and to facilitate a greater availability of brothers to serve throughout our Order, the

¹⁹ See *LS* 51.

²⁰ See *CL* 34; *RM* 1; *EG* 14-18; *Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod of Bishops on The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, 84. 2012.

²¹ See *LS* 214.

²² See *EG* 199.

²³ See *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 164. October 2018.

²⁴ See *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 31, 32, 34. Pontifical Council for Culture. May 1999.

²⁵ See *MD* 29.

²⁶ See *CGO*, 1989; 1995; 2001; 2007; 2013.

²⁷ See *sol.* II, 1.

²⁸ See *VC* 31.

²⁹ See *Const.* 8.

³⁰ See *CGO* 2007, P8, P9, P12; *CGO* 2013, 19, 28; *CGI* 2016, 13, 14.

Particular Plan of Formation for each circumscription should include that those in formation will study and practice a second language and will spend time experiencing another Circumscription.³¹

3.4. The Formation Community

24. *A community is formative to the extent that it permits each one of its members to grow in fidelity to the Lord according to the charism of his or her institute.*³² For Augustinians it is at the very heart of our identity and charism. *The communion of life which Augustine proposes to us in imitation of the primitive apostolic community (See Acts 2:42-47), is an anticipation of complete and definitive union in God and the way to achieve it.*³³ The central nature of community life in our spirituality underlines the importance of the formation community, how it is made up, and the structures and spirit which pervade it. Through the lived experience of community life, the candidates are formed in what it means to be an Augustinian.

25. Formation communities, of their nature, require a structure and rhythm of their own. The years of initial formation are to be spent in communities which guarantee and give emphasized witness to the values expressed in Part III of this *Plan*. Each solemnly professed Friar in a formation community is to be constantly aware of the formative influence of his presence, example, support, and encouragement.³⁴

26. Because of this influence, the members of formation communities are to strive to deepen the bonds of unity among themselves. This can be accomplished through dialogue at different levels, sharing of material, spiritual, and intellectual resources, practicing tolerance, forbearance, and patience towards one another.³⁵ If possible, these communities should try to develop some structures for involving candidates in the discussion of those affairs of the community which concern everyone, with all due regard to the provisions of our *Constitutions*.

4. Collaborators in Formation

4.1. Formation Personnel

27. In each circumscription, or group of circumscriptions, the critical role of accompanying candidates in formation is entrusted to one or more brothers, who exercise this ministry on behalf of their respective circumscriptions and the Order. Formation personnel are to be carefully selected from among those who show a special love for Christ, the Church, and the Augustinian Order. Persons who are chosen to work in formation should already have a reasonably broad experience of community life and of apostolic activity. They are to be suitably prepared beforehand,³⁶ and their tenure in office should be such as to ensure a certain stability in the task of formation. It is their duty to accompany, teach, guide, and direct the human and spiritual growth of those entrusted to them at each stage of the formation process, seeking to discern the authenticity of each person's call to

³¹ See *CGO* 2013, 23.1-2.

³² *PI* 27.

³³ *Const.* 25.

³⁴ See *Const.* 212.

³⁵ See *Const.* 214.

³⁶ See *Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment*, 163-164. October 2018; *RFIS*, 49; *Const.* 215.

Augustinian religious life.³⁷ *The chief instrument of formation is personal dialogue, a practice of irreplaceable and commendable effectiveness which should take place regularly and with a certain frequency.*³⁸ Finally, it is their responsibility to carefully examine and evaluate each person's progress, and to make appropriate recommendations in this regard to the major superior and his council.

28. As it is impossible for an individual friar to possess all the desired qualities and preparation, the formation director must be able to count on others who are more specialized to help him in certain areas of formation, for example, in theology, ecclesiology, sociology, Augustinian spirituality and history, in the psycho-pedagogical sciences, and in the spiritual accompaniment of the candidates.

29. Where this ministry has been entrusted to a formation team, the Provincial or other competent authority must make sure that the brothers who form this team are prepared to work together, in accordance with the *Particular Plan of Formation* drawn up by the Circumscriptions. This plan is to clearly indicate the substance and content of the formation process with regard to the organization of community life in its various dimensions: prayer, interpersonal relations, recreation, study, work, house duties, formation in Augustinian spirituality, personal conferences and evaluation criteria. Furthermore, the members of the formation team should complement one another in the service of a coherent and consistent vision of Augustinian formation in the Order and on the level of the local and universal Church. The use of qualified personnel and their adequate preparation must be a priority commitment.³⁹

4.2. Academic Instructors

30. An important aspect of our Augustinian charism is our commitment to cultivate studies and the search for truth, with love.⁴⁰ The professors, especially in the areas of theology and philosophy and social sciences, in the centers of education where our students attend classes, participate in the formation of our candidates and offer them the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to be critical thinkers. These men and women offer their expertise and knowledge with regard to particular ecclesiastical and related pedagogical disciplines. They also provide testimony and witness to their own vocation as educators. Their role in the intellectual formation of our brothers is no small contribution to the overall formation of each candidate in each stage of initial formation.⁴¹ These professors and the education centers they represent have a complementary, yet distinct role to play in relation to the formation community.⁴² Therefore, a close relationship should be maintained with those who instruct our students in the initial stages of formation.

4.3. The Vocation Director

31. *Each Circumscription should have one or more vocation directors who are to seek candidates for the Order, and who, together with other friars named by the major superior with the consent of the council, constitute the "Commission for Vocations".*⁴³ These directors accompany candidates at the initial stages of vocational discernment. They are to work in cooperation with their local religious

³⁷ See *Const.* 215.

³⁸ *VC* 66.

³⁹ See *RC* 98, 110.

⁴⁰ See *Const.* 125.

⁴¹ See *PDV* 67.

⁴² See *PI* 99.

⁴³ *Const.* 188.

superiors and councils, the local and national ecclesiastical authorities, local and national religious vocation associations, school ministers and administrators, pastors, parents, families, and youth animators. They are to develop a pastoral plan for creating a culture of vocation awareness in their Circumscriptions. As with the selection and profile of formation directors, the vocation directors must be men of prayer who, in their lives, give witness to their commitment to their love for Christ and demonstrate the value in living the Augustinian common life.⁴⁴ In accordance with Pope Francis, *Wherever there is life, fervour and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise.*⁴⁵

5. The Subject of Formation: The Candidate

32. Each candidate is also responsible for his own formation. Called as he is in his humanity to be of service to others, his vocation and formation must assist him to become more fully human. His search for God, in and through our way of life, is rooted in baptism and is an expression of God's call. In the expressed desire of each candidate to live with us we recognize the meeting of two freedoms: God's free and loving initiative in calling him, and the candidate's free response to that call. This initial "yes" and the deepening of this response, becomes one continuous movement which unfolds over an entire lifetime. It is a movement which, like Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Mary, Joseph, Monica and Augustine, involves a journey of faith. It is a formation which is more properly understood as a transformation in Christ.⁴⁶ *In as much as the formation of candidates aims at an integral development of the person, it must be one that is human, Christian, affective, intellectual, religious, and Augustinian, as well as apostolic and pastoral.*⁴⁷

33. The greatest care is to be taken both in the selection and in the preparation of candidates before they are admitted to the novitiate.⁴⁸ They are to manifest a progressive restlessness for God, a desire to grow in prayer, and an awareness of being drawn towards the person of Christ and his message. This awareness becomes evident in their willingness to learn and to grow in response to God's love. *They must be helped to acquire serious and orderly study habits in such a way that through a knowledge of philosophy, theology and other human sciences, they will arrive at an authentic understanding of Christ and will be proficient to minister in the apostolate.*⁴⁹ They should give evidence of an attraction to community life and the capacity to share material and spiritual resources.

34. Since candidates are ultimately responsible for their formation, the time of initial formation is a time for each candidate to demonstrate a growing level of human maturity, which reflects a capacity for self-direction and an ability to make responsible choices while being accompanied by the formation director in each stage. The candidates are to demonstrate a mature capacity to choose to live a life of celibate loving, voluntary poverty, and holy obedience.⁵⁰ This and other choices require a degree of inner freedom which cannot be presumed. Where necessary in this regard, a candidate should be given whatever professional help is needed, so that the values of the Gospel will be his prevailing focus.⁵¹ Personal faith in Jesus Christ and a lively commitment to those values enshrined

⁴⁴ See *Const.* 187.

⁴⁵ *EG* 107.

⁴⁶ See *VC* 65.

⁴⁷ *Const.* 192.

⁴⁸ See *Const.* 202; *PI* 42.

⁴⁹ *Const.* 194; See also *PDV* 51-56.

⁵⁰ See *Const.* 59.

⁵¹ See *VC* 32.

in the evangelical counsels are the foundation for meaningful participation in community life. Without this personal conviction and commitment, community life is undermined and runs the risk of becoming merely an arbitrary vehicle for satisfying the human need for support, understanding and belonging.⁵²

35. Each circumscription, or group of circumscriptions shall develop in their *Particular Plan of Formation*, a profile of the candidate seeking entrance into the Order which will be given periodic review, taking into account, Canon law,⁵³ the *Constitutions*,⁵⁴ particular financial, cultural, ministerial and ecclesial determining factors of each circumscription. This profile may include, among other factors: age (both minimum and maximum), previous academic performance and degrees, academic ability, health (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual), work experience, legal background checks, sacramental history and spiritual journey of faith, financial responsibility, previous relationships, and family of origin. *Care should be taken not to hasten the time for this admission, nor to defer it unduly, provided that it is possible to arrive at a certain judgment on whether the person is a promising candidate.*⁵⁵

⁵² See *VFC* 24.

⁵³ See *CIC* 641-661.

⁵⁴ See *Const.* 202, 203.

⁵⁵ *PI* 43.

*So whenever you show greater concern
for the common good than for your own,
you may know that you are growing in charity.
(Rule of Saint Augustine V, 32)*

PART III: FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS FOR AUGUSTINIAN FORMATION

36. When we speak of Augustinian formation, we understand a formation that is carried out in keeping with specific emphases that Augustine has given to the message of Christ, emphases which reveal his personal ideal. In no way is Augustine intended to become the center of our lives. That center is Christ and his Gospel.¹ Faith in Jesus Christ, however, is never lived abstractly, but always in a personal way, as is evident in the differences between Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. Different spiritualities or charisms are at work in these authors, as each one stresses different aspects of the same Gospel.

This phenomenon is repeated throughout the history of Christianity. Even today we encounter new spiritualities, that is, new emphases on a particular evangelical value. But personal emphases are always limited. They do not cover the whole of Christian life, and if they are no longer suitable for our times, we must look for other guiding principles. *The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.*²

37. Augustinian formation, first and foremost, is to foster in the candidates a love for Christ with a foundation in Sacred Scripture. The Scriptures played an important role in Augustine's life as he studied them and made progress in understanding them. In the Scriptures he sought the foundation and inspiration for his lifestyle, his spirituality, his contemplation and his theology, as expressed in his *Confessions: May your Scriptures be my chaste delight...your voice my joy*³ and *May the divine readings and the holy oracles of God which have sounded in our ears make a nest for themselves in our minds.*⁴ He put his whole Roman cultural and rhetorical education at the service of the Word of God. The Bible, especially the Psalms, and the Our Father, were the source of his personal prayer. Assisting his fellow-believers and monks to become more familiar with the Bible was considered by Augustine as his most important contribution to their formation. Augustine's example in the love and use of the Scriptures provides us with a sound orientation for our life.

38. It is encouraging for us that Augustine clearly indicated the goal of his religious communities. *How we wish to arrange our life, and how with God's help we are already doing so, is known to many of you from the Holy Scriptures. Nonetheless, in order to refresh your memory, the relevant passage from the Acts of the Apostles will be read out.*⁵ His model was the first Christian community of Jerusalem, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (4,32): *being of one mind and one heart* in our common striving toward God. Augustine considered the revival of this ideal important for his own time, and he saw in it a major contribution for the promotion of the Reign of God among human

¹ See EG 130.

² GS 4.

³ conf. XI,2,3.

⁴ ser. 343,1.

⁵ ser. 356,1.

beings. That this ideal has lost nothing of its challenge is evident as we look at the world around us today.

It is characteristic of Augustine that, to the concept ‘*of one mind and one heart*’ from the Acts of the Apostles, he adds the words ‘*on the way to God*’.⁶ Unanimity as such does not yet make a group a religious community. Yet unanimity is necessary for the formation of each and every group, whatever its character. Through the addition of ‘*on the way to God*’, however, we are given a good description of what, in Augustine's conception, a religious community is. It is a group of Christians who have decided freely to set out together, united and of one mind and one heart, on the way to God. For this reason, and for this reason alone, have they come together in the first place.

39. Augustine's approach to asceticism is markedly different from that of his forerunners. He considered that every aspect of the common life is in itself an exercise in asceticism. He saw religious life as an alternative model of social relationships, which differ from those of society at large. A monastery has a social function of love and intends the renewal of authentic human relationships inspired by humility, and not by power. In this sense Augustinian community life is also prophetic,⁷ that is, a proclamation of our faith in the transforming power of God and his Reign.

In the following paragraphs, community of mind and heart centered upon God will be considered as the core of Augustine's spirituality. This will show that community is at the heart of the entire formation program, insofar as it demands a sharing of life, a sharing of our search for God, a sharing of apostolate.

1. Sharing Life in Community

1.1. Formation- Relationship with God, Self and Others.

40. Within our tradition community life is normative. It is here that Augustine placed a special emphasis on the following of Christ. Building a good community implies putting into practice the command of love of God and love of neighbor. Community life consists in the cultivation of one's own interpersonal relationships. This life encompasses the whole of concrete human existence: sharing in one another's faith, hope, addictions, affections, ideals, shortcomings, feelings, thoughts, sinfulness, activities, failures, responsibilities, etc.

41. Such sharing presupposes openness to others, a sense of belonging, acceptance, trust, support, and encouragement, as well as sensitivity and presence to others in the community. Although some people may naturally be more sociable than others, a certain degree of corporeal and spiritual presence has to be learned. For the individual, the local community is the environment in which the most immediate demands are made. The community should be such that it attracts the candidate, so that he will not be overburdened when receiving his initial formation in community life. It is also important that those in initial formation learn to build community among themselves by working and dialoguing together. Living together means in a special way speaking together, for speech is our strongest means of communication. Without dialogue, community life simply disappears, just as it happens in all human relationships when dialogue fails.

42. Even within the Augustinian experience of the common life, the candidate should be aware that there are different types of community life. For example, there will be a difference between an Augustinian community involved in parochial apostolic ministry, and one involved in educational ministry. Differences may also be noted because of differing ages, cultural, family, or national

⁶ *reg.* 1.

⁷ See *Const.* 33, 55, 69, 73.

backgrounds. Some relationships will develop more deeply than others; sometimes more trust will be present, sometimes less. There are as many relationships as there are persons.

Nevertheless, an Augustinian community has to fulfill some characteristic requirements. According to Augustine, community life has meaning when it leads the members to God. It cannot be considered as a mere means to another goal. *Community life in itself is the essential Gospel value which calls for our total dedication and in which we find the basis and the sustaining force of our service to the Church and to the world.*⁸ A utilitarian concept of community life is contrary to Augustinian community life. *True unity of hearts demands an authentic and sincere common life according to the spirit of our Order, so that all of us, as members of one brotherhood and animated by the Augustinian spirit of love, may be able to share a single purpose of life in prayer and in the apostolate, in work and in leisure, in sadness and in joy.*⁹ This spirit of love remains authentic even in the midst of differences and conflicts. Addressing our differences or conflicts in community is a critical part of common life. All aspects of our life together, our similarities and our differences, must be addressed in this loving spirit. Augustinian formation assists our members to learn how best to acknowledge and respond to the reality of our differences. As Saint Augustine preached in a sermon on the First Letter of John: *Love, and do what you want. If you are silent, be silent with love; if you cry out, cry out with love; if you chastise, chastise with love; if you spare, spare with love. The root of love must be within; nothing but good can come forth from this root.*¹⁰

1.2. Formation to a Life of Love, Humility, Friendship, Communication, and Harmony

Love

43. *If you begin to love, God has begun to dwell in you.*¹¹ Whereas other Christian writers emphasize biblical values such as prayer, obedience, simplicity, and poverty -and they do so rightly- Augustine emphasizes in a personal way love of one's sister and brother. The double commandment of love in Matthew (22:37-40) is the theological ground on which Augustine defends a good community life as a value in itself, because it has to do immediately with love of neighbor and responsibility for one another. It is Augustine's conviction that love of God comes first as a commandment, but that love of neighbor comes first on the level of practice.¹²

44. The love of God the Father, of Christ the Son of God, and of his members, our neighbors, are so intimately interconnected that they include one another and cannot be separated.¹³ Moreover, Augustine insists on love of neighbor as the concrete norm for our love of God, for by its practical nature it excludes any self-deception.¹⁴ This view, that love of neighbor is the most appropriate means of giving concrete expression to our love of God, seems to be evident, but experience teaches that it is not all that easy to accomplish. This is better understood by attending to two conclusions drawn from this principle by Augustine himself:

a) The members of a community have to care for good interpersonal relationships among themselves in daily life. Formation comes about every day through interpersonal relationships, moments of exchange and discussion which result in the development of that 'fertile soil', in which a vocation matures concretely.¹⁵ The foundation of Augustinian life is life in common,

⁸ *Const.* 38.

⁹ *Const.* 109.

¹⁰ *ep. Io. tr.* 7, 8.

¹¹ *ep. Io. tr.* 8,12.

¹² See *ep.* 55,21,38; *Io ev. tr.* 17,8-9.

¹³ See *ep. Io. tr.* 10,3.

¹⁴ See *exp. Gal.* 45; *ep. Io. tr.* 8,4; *trin.* VIII, 8, 12.

¹⁵ *RFIS* 50.

in which all the brothers by sharing themselves, construct a path directed to God in service to others and in the communion of all their goods, perfecting themselves through the gift of divine grace.¹⁶

b) The fruitfulness of our prayers, of our liturgy and the sacramental life, will be in relation to our love for human beings. This does not mean that Augustine underestimates prayer and the sacraments, but rather that their goal is to grow in love, faith and hope. All may sign themselves with the sign of Christ's cross, all may answer 'Amen', all may sing 'Alleluia', all may be baptized, all may come to church and line the walls of the basilicas. But there is nothing to distinguish the children of God from the children of the devil except unselfish love... If you do not have this one thing, nothing else is worthwhile. If you lack all the rest, have this, and you have fulfilled the Law.¹⁷

Humility

45. A fundamental disposition for living together in love is humility. There is no love without the openness of humble patience: *Where humility reigns, there is love.*¹⁸ Humility is the fertile soil of love. Love always includes one's ability to transcend egotism and go out to others. But this cannot be done without humility, which breaks down the walls imprisoning the ego in itself. Humility does not consist in slavish subservience, but in a sense of reality: *You are not told: be something less than you are, but: know what you are. Know that you are weak, that you are a human being, that you are a sinner.*¹⁹ We discover the important place of humility in Augustine's spirituality in his own words: *I would wish you to place yourselves with all your love under Christ, and to pave no other way in order to reach and to attain the truth than what has already been paved by him who, as God, knows the weakness of our steps. This way is, in the first place, humility; in the second place, humility; in the third place, humility... As often as you ask me about the Christian religion's norms of conduct, I prefer to give no other answer than, humility.*²⁰ The fruitfulness of the religious state of life remains dependent on the Christian values of love and humility.

Friendship in God

46. Friendship in God is another characteristic of Augustine's spirituality. Augustine gives it a place within religious life, and considers it as a great help and consolation in our troubles. *I admit that I throw myself easily and completely on the love of my most intimate friends, especially when I am weary of the world's scandals, and I find rest in that love, free of worries. This is because I feel that God is present there, on whom I throw myself without fear, and in whom I find secure rest. In this security of mine, I am not afraid of the uncertainty of tomorrow, characteristic of human frailty... What ideas and thoughts I entrust to a human being who is full of Christian charity and has become a faithful friend for me, I do not entrust to a human being, but to God, in whom that person dwells and who made him a faithful friend.*²¹ The only authentic friendship, however, is that one which God brings about between persons who are united to him in the bond of love which is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.²² Friendship, is a concrete expression of that

¹⁶ *Const.* 6.

¹⁷ *ep. Io. tr.* 5,7.

¹⁸ *ep. Io. tr.*: Prologue.

¹⁹ *ser.* 137,4,4.

²⁰ *ep.* 118,3,22.

²¹ *ep.* 73,3,10.

²² See *conf.* IV,4,7; Rom 5:5.

charity which seeks to serve God in the other, rather than seeking in relationship with the other the gratification of desires or needs which in themselves are inconsistent with the values of religious life.

47. The composition of Augustine's communities underwent a change when he established his foundations in Hippo. Persons whom he had not known before became members of the community. It became impossible to realize with each one of them the high level of friendship as described by Augustine himself in a conference given to his young monks: *We can consider a person as a friend if we dare to entrust all our ideas to him.*²³ "Ideas" here means all that is going on in our hearts. Friendship is based on mutual love and mutual trust. Growth into such friendship is a process, as Augustine remarks: *We may never reject the friendship of anyone who wishes to be our friend. Certainly we are not obliged to accept everyone immediately in friendship, but it should be our wish to accept everybody as a friend. Our attitude towards others should be such that the possibility of taking them into our friendship remains open.*²⁴

48. Realistically speaking, we may consider friendship as an ideal. But we should not forget that friendship is only one form of love, and most of our relationships take place on a different level, with each of them having a value of its own. It would be quite an achievement if every Augustinian community possessed a loving and inviting atmosphere and put into practice what Augustine sees as the heart of all love: the desire for the well-being of the other (*amor benevolentiae*). This love for one another can take shape in many different ways: *Talk and laugh together, exchange small acts of kindness; join in the pleasure that books can give; be serious or happy together; disagree without bitterness, just as one can sometimes disagree with oneself, and with that same disagreement add spice to customary harmony; learn from the other and teach something to others; sadly miss the absent and welcome warmly those returning home.*²⁵ This takes into account that true friendship is only possible in God.

Communication

49. Possidius tells us that sharing ideas and experiences played a prominent role in Augustine's life: *At table, he liked reading and conversation more than food and drink.*²⁶ In Augustine's letters we read passages like this: *You know all this, but because you are for me another ego, about what else should I prefer talking to you, than about what I say to myself?*²⁷ Communication is at the heart of the network of relationships that exist among the members of a religious community. No community can grow or accomplish its mission of witness unless its members are freely communicating and are in communion with one another.²⁸ But communication and communion involve risk and trust. Risk, because by opening ourselves to others we make ourselves vulnerable; trust, because we need to know that we will not be hurt by the others, for we feel received and loved by them. Only in a community that has achieved a level of deep relationships, can members begin to think in terms of "we". We are called to accompany our brothers in initial formation in such a way that they grow in their ability to develop mature relationships in community where communication is valued and encouraged.²⁹

²³ *div. qu.* 83, q.71.6.

²⁴ *div. qu.* 83, q.71.6.

²⁵ *conf.* IV 8,13.

²⁶ *Vita Aug.* 22.

²⁷ *ep.* 38,1.

²⁸ See *Const.* 30.

²⁹ See *PI* 27.

Regular house chapters and days of retreat or recollection can be useful instruments in creating the opportunity for such communication.³⁰

Harmony

50. True formation for Augustinian religious life must first of all prepare for living harmoniously in a community.³¹ Wherever people try to build up a community, be this in youth movements, peer groups, support groups, in families or in religious life, they will be confronted with tension and conflict. For it is a fact that we have different personalities, feelings, perceptions, expectations, ideas, choices, needs, and values. The tension between the self and the other (or the group) can express itself in egoism, pride, exploitation, or destructive criticism. Such tensions and conflicts should not be considered abnormal; they are a natural part of human interaction, at both the personal and the group level. However, neither should they be merely frustrating experiences. They should be rewarding ones, insofar as they further personal growth and foster greater pleasure in group participation. Communities of consecrated life, where persons of different ages, languages and cultures meet as brothers and sisters, are signs that dialogue is always possible and that communion can bring differences into harmony.³²

Harmony, as revealed in the beauty of creation, the mystery of the Trinity, the search for inner peace, dialogue, humility, attentiveness, and gratefulness is reflected in the harmony in which we are called to live in community.³³ The harmony of living together with one heart intent upon God is a dynamic relationship of love. The art of developing interior harmony must also be realized within the self during the stages of initial formation.³⁴ One of the aspects of initial formation is to accompany the candidate in discovering the beauty of inner peace, concord, and harmony, which one then brings to the local community, the Church and to the world.³⁵

1.3. Formation to Community Life in the Light of the Three Vows

51. Religious life is only one of the ways in which the Gospel of Jesus can be lived. Jesus' appeal to follow him was addressed to everybody who accepted his message, without distinction. All who have expressed their will to follow him through baptism participate in his mission to build up the Reign of God. In other words, every believer has the task of allowing God to reign in this world by doing his will, which consists essentially in bringing about justice, peace, and love among human beings. This applies not only to life choices, such as marriage or religious life, but also to the different professions of baptized persons. A laborer, a lawyer, a physician, an employer, and all in civil vocations have to practice their profession as Christians in the light of the Reign of God.

Following Christ always implies personal fidelity. When it is a question of a life choice that is a response to a particular call from God, such fidelity is all the more required. Religious life is a radical form of living the Gospel.³⁶

52. Religious communities wish to realize their original inspiration through a particular evangelical value. The *Rule* of Augustine can be characterized as an expression of the Christian challenge to bring all people into full community. The *Rule* sounds a protest against inequality in a society which is marked by egoism and individualism, by possessiveness, pride and power, by a distorted conception of freedom and sexuality. To be sure, all Christians are called to live the eschatological and ascetical

³⁰ See *Const.* 102.

³¹ See *reg.* I.

³² *VC* 51.

³³ See *LS* 222-227.

³⁴ See *VC* 67.

³⁵ See *Const.* 192-193, 196-197.

³⁶ See *PC* 1, 2, *VC* 18.

aspect of Jesus' message. Because God is the final goal of the human being, one should not cling to material goods, to complete autonomy, or to an unrestrained sexuality. The human person should not consider these things as the final goal of life. Religious, however, make this eschatological aspect a concrete part of their lifestyle by the three vows.

53. Augustine's emphasis on love in community life reflects his interpretation of the vows. To become familiar with this interpretation is an important task in formation. Though religious life constitutes a particular call in the Church, as such, it does not guarantee that religious will lead a better Christian life than other Christians, or be more perfect, for perfection is an inner reality, not an exterior one. Everything depends on the degree of our love, including love of peace and justice. A fresh concern for the interior aspect of the evangelical counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience is our urgent task.

The vow of poverty or sharing goods in common

54. Poverty in the strict sense of the word means to lack the most elementary, vital goods, which are necessary for remaining alive, such as food, water, and shelter. Poverty in this sense was never considered by Augustine as a value in itself, but rather as an evil that has to be combated in the world with all available energy. His preferred approach to poverty is based on the *Acts of the Apostles* (4:32,35): *Everything they owned was held in common, and each one received whatever he had need of*. Therefore, the phrase *community of goods* or *sharing goods* is better fitted to his spirituality and more in accordance with the lifestyle in which Augustinians are called to live. Community of goods applies not only to the sharing of material goods, but also to the sharing of spiritual goods.³⁷ Such sharing, through a frugal and ascetical lifestyle, opens one to a deep inner freedom.

55. The intention behind sharing material goods is to create new relationships of equality and unity among those living in the monastery.³⁸ Frequently, in community life, the use of common goods as if they were personal property is the source of individualism, egoism, jealousy, competition, covetousness, conflict, and struggle.³⁹ The vow of poverty not only deals with placing the economic fruits of our work at the disposition of the community and receiving what we need from the community. It also supposes a creative attitude towards material goods and their management: care, just distribution, personal stewardship, and responsibility for goods entrusted to the person. The program of initial formation *should include programs on finances and management, on the costs of community life and the costs of the missions, as well as on accountability for living the vow of poverty in the context of the current socio-economic situation*.⁴⁰

56. The sharing of material goods is for Augustine a necessary requirement for forming an authentic community of brothers or sisters, living together in harmony in the same house. The sharing of material goods, however, is not meant to remain limited to the building up of community among ourselves alone. It should be extended to the realization of a better and more just society in the world. Our vow of poverty implies a preferential option for the poor.⁴¹ It also implies an integral ecological

³⁷ See *Const.* 32.

³⁸ See *Const.* 7.

³⁹ See *en. Ps.* 131, 5.

⁴⁰ *Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, CIVCSVA, Vatican City, 2014. Sec. 3.

⁴¹ See *VC*, 82, 90; *ser.* 123, 2-4; *Const.* 73.

conscience where one is concerned about the care of the goods of the earth.⁴² As a matter of course, this presupposes a personal simplicity of lifestyle: we are not expected to have every desired luxury at our fingertips. The *Rule* declares: *They should esteem themselves the richer who are stronger in enduring privations. It is better to need less than to have more.*⁴³ An ascetical lifestyle is no denial of the goodness of creation, but it puts material goods at the service of others. As Augustine says: *First and foremost, clearly, please remember the poor, so that what you withhold from yourselves by living more sparingly, you may deposit in the treasury of heaven. Let the hungry Christ receive what the fasting Christian receives less of. Let the self-denial of one who undertakes it willingly become the support of the one who has nothing. Let the voluntary want of the person who has plenty become the needed plenty of the person in want.*⁴⁴ According to these principles, we are to regularly evaluate our own situation. Are rich and poor persons in one and the same house not a contradiction to our spirituality? Moreover, are we able to support the pursuit of justice, peace, and integrity of creation in the world, if they are not prevalent in our houses?

57. The same must be said of the sharing of spiritual goods: faith and inspiration, ideals and expectations, insights and ideas, talents and feelings. It is evident that these are to be made available to one another, for this is an essential condition for community living. However, the sharing of spiritual goods may not be limited to this alone. A union of hearts and minds will enable us to communicate inner values to the world through our ministry. People need to witness groups of persons, motivated by the Gospel and by their love of God and of one another, who live in such a way that loneliness and alienation are dispelled. In this way community life also takes on an apostolic meaning.

The vow of obedience, or sharing responsibility in community

58. Obedience as a Gospel virtue consists in listening to (*ob-audire*) and doing the will of God in imitation of the Lord Jesus. *Look at your Lord, look at your Head, look at the model of your life; contemplate your Redeemer: 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass me by'. In this way he shows his human will; but immediately he brings down his resistance to obedience: 'However, not my will, but yours be done'. In the same way ought you to obey the will of God.*⁴⁵

In the Augustinian concept of community, in which all are fellow servants of the one Lord, both the superior and those who are not superiors are subject to obedience. Even though in different ways, obedience to the will of God which is made concrete in the common project, the authority of the Prior, and in the laws that regulate community life are to be cherished and observed.

59. Authority, which is derived from the Latin *augere* (= to promote, to further), is to be distinguished from power, which is derived from the Latin word *possum* (= I can, I am able to do something). A recurring theme in the works of Augustine is that authority, among Christians, means service. To be in charge is to serve others. *Reverence for the will of God keeps those in authority in a state of humble seeking, so that their acting conforms as much as possible to that holy will.*⁴⁶ Authority in the religious sense is the opposite of dominating others. The person who is chosen to be the leader of a group is the person who bears the heavy burden of being responsible, not only for all the individual members of the group, but also for the well-being and well-functioning of the community as a whole. He has to be concerned for the living out of the communal charism; he has to take action in the case of a

⁴² See *LS* 158.

⁴³ *reg.* III, 18; See *op. mon.* 25, 32-33; *ser.* 301A, 2-4.

⁴⁴ *ser.* 210, 10.12.

⁴⁵ *ser.* 296, 8.

⁴⁶ *FT* 12.

violation of that charism; he has to be an example himself of fidelity to the founder's charism; he has to serve others in love, as well as encourage, support, and be patient with everyone.⁴⁷

The Augustinian formation program assists and trains our brothers how to be leaders in the Augustinian community and in the apostolate. It is important to include leadership training in the initial stages of formation so that our brothers are adequately prepared to respond as Christian leaders in the communities to which they are called to serve. *They should be educated so that they do not become prey to 'clericalism', nor yield to the temptation of modelling their lives on the search for popular consensus. This would inevitably lead them to fall short in exercising their ministry as leaders of the community, leading them to think about the Church as a merely human institution.*⁴⁸

This training includes, public speaking, managing group dynamics, discernment, listening, decision making, and understanding the critical role that service plays in recognizing one's authority in Augustinian leadership. Both obedience and authority are extremely important in order to assure unity and harmony in the community, to further the search for God, and to maintain the common good above personal interests. *With the intention of doing God's will, authority and obedience are not therefore two distinct realities or things absolutely opposed but rather two dimensions of the same evangelical reality, of the same Christian mystery, two complementary ways of participating in the same oblation of Christ.*⁴⁹

60. Obedience, for Augustine, is relationship with an emphasis on love: *By obeying with greater readiness, you not only show mercy for yourselves, but also for your superior.*⁵⁰ Since showing compassion is an act of love, this means that through obedience we not only love ourselves by performing a good and right act, but we also love our superior by lightening the burden of his responsibility for the whole group. Such a friendly attitude can be called *shared responsibility*. From this it follows that obedience in Augustine's view is more than a vertical relationship between the superior and the individual member of the group. It is also a horizontal relationship among all the members of the community, as appears clearly from the *Rule's* chapter on fraternal admonition⁵¹ in which our mutual responsibility for one another is emphasized.

61. Obedience encompasses two movements: one of listening to, or being attentive to, the appeals, demands, or needs of another person; and, secondly, one of giving a concrete response in deeds. Here is not meant what is sometimes called blind obedience, for this would contradict the fact that Augustine attaches so much value to dialogue and to respect for each one's personality. For Augustine obedience is a loving act of interpersonal relationship, communication and service.⁵² It would be egoistic and loveless to think that one is free to do as he likes, for then the person is no longer available for the community. An individual who makes himself untouchable by going only his own way and neglecting the needs and demands of his superior and his brothers is acting unjustly and abusing the good will of the others. Such an attitude is simply a refusal of community life. *True love for the community is really what makes persons in authority able to reconcile firmness and patience, listening to each one, and the courage to make decisions.*⁵³

⁴⁷ See *reg.* VII, 46.

⁴⁸ *RFIS* 33.

⁴⁹ *FT* 12.

⁵⁰ *reg.* VII, 47.

⁵¹ See *reg.* IV.

⁵² See *en. Ps.* 99, 7.

⁵³ *FT* 20.

The vow of chastity or sharing an undivided heart

62. Religious chastity and marriage are different forms of being in relationship. *The consecrated life must present to today's world examples of chastity lived by men and women who show balance, self-mastery, an enterprising spirit, and psychological and affective maturity. Thanks to this witness, human love is offered a stable point of reference: the pure love which consecrated persons draw from the contemplation of Trinitarian love, revealed to us in Christ.*⁵⁴ The consecrated person desires to share his heart, love, friendship, happiness, support, help and encouragement with others in a chaste way. He also receives these from others in return. He wants to be the companion of people in joy and in sorrow, in prosperity or in need, the companion of families and groups and of lonely people and of people seeking for the meaning of life. He wants to be present to people because of, and together with, his faith in God, his hope on God, and his love of God. In this way we find an apostolic meaning in this vow.⁵⁵ Living a chaste life is assisted by one's experience of God. The vow of chastity is both grace and commitment, gift and decision.⁵⁶ *Precisely because they are immersed in this mystery, consecrated persons feel themselves capable of a radical and universal love, which gives them the strength for the self-mastery and discipline necessary in order not to fall under the domination of the senses and instincts. Consecrated chastity thus appears as a joyful and liberating experience.*⁵⁷

63. In his *Confessions*, Augustine shares his experiences of adolescence, young adulthood and adulthood of delaying his acceptance of living a chaste life.⁵⁸ Augustine eventually affirms chastity as being a gift when he describes in his *Confessions*, his own struggle with living a chaste and celibate life and admits his ultimate dependence on God when he prays: *Give what you command, and then command whatever you will.*⁵⁹ Engaging our brothers in formation in a conversation regarding the struggles, gifts, challenges, and freedom that living a chaste life offers will be a critical aspect of their formation.

Augustine offers a reflection on chastity with a meaningful distinction between physical virginity and virginity of the heart. Just as in the Old Testament the people of Israel are called *virgin* (Amos 5:2), so Paul regarded the Church as a *chaste virgin* (2 Cor. 11,2). Certainly, not all the Church's members are virgins in a physical sense, but each of the faithful should possess, by the gift of himself or herself to Christ, a spiritual virginity. This latter consists in the integrity of one's faith, hope, and love, and this kind of virginity is to be attributed to all Christians. But physical virginity vowed to God is, according to Augustine, not only a particular expression and realization of the virginity of the Church, it is also a witness and contribution to it (*Ecclesia Virgo*). Moreover, he stresses that consecrated virginity has to be fruitful in a spiritual way, for it ought to bestow the life of Christ, our Savior, on other people (*Ecclesia Mater*). In these two approaches we discover some valuable community aspects, which have not lost their topical interest. It is a part of the Church's life, and it has to be fruitful for others.⁶⁰ *The chastity of celibates and virgins, as a manifestation of dedication to God with an undivided heart (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34), is a reflection of the infinite love which links the three Divine Persons in the mysterious depths of the life of the Trinity, the love to which the Incarnate Word bears witness even to the point of giving his life, the love "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5), which evokes a response of total love for God and our brothers and sisters.*⁶¹

⁵⁴ VC 88.

⁵⁵ See VC 7, 21, 32.

⁵⁶ See PC 12.

⁵⁷ VC 88.

⁵⁸ See *conf.* VIII, 7, 17.

⁵⁹ *conf.* X, 29, 40.

⁶⁰ See *virg.* 2, 6, 27, 48.

⁶¹ VC 21.

64. *Virginity is held in honor, not because it is virginity, but because it is dedicated to God.*⁶² This means that our energy is concentrated on one single goal: serving God, for *Where your treasure is, there is your heart (Mt.6:21)*. This reminds us of Augustine's ideal as it is expressed at the beginning of the *Rule*: a common life of mutual trust and interdependence, which expresses unity of heart and mind, centered upon God. This concentration on God is the reason why Augustine stresses so strongly in his *Rule* mutual responsibility, fraternal concern, and, in the case of someone damaging the common ideal, admonition, accompanied by love of the person. This applies not only to sexual misbehavior, but also to other grave offenses. When the unity of striving for God is broken by the failure of one member, the group as a whole suffers. Mutual protection is the embodiment of God's care for each one.⁶³

2. Sharing the Search for God in Community

2.1. Formation: A Journey of Faith

65. The opening words of the *Rule* give a mandate: we are to be of one mind and one heart *in Deum*. This Latin accusative, *in Deum*, deserves our special attention. It indicates dynamic movement: as a group we are striving for God. We are pilgrims on the way. Change is a constant in the life process, for we are always called by the Lord to new and different ways of growing in the fullness of God's life in us. Yet resistance to change or conversion seems to be one of the greatest problems in community life. In order to reach a peaceful coexistence, however, continual conversion will be needed, in the sense that we leave behind our faults and strive always for what is better. As Augustine says: *Make progress, my brothers, examine yourselves honestly again and again. Put yourself to the test. Do not be content with what you are, if you want to become what you are not yet. For where you have grown pleased with yourself, there you will remain. But if you say, 'that's enough', you are finished. Always add something more, keep moving forward, always make progress.*⁶⁴

2.2. Formation to Encounter God

66. *Gathered together as a community, the first service that we render to the Church and humanity as religious is witnessing to the experience of our encounter with God through his Word and the events of history.*⁶⁵ Augustinian formation is meant to assist our brothers to discover the many opportunities we have to encounter God. It builds upon our personal and communal relationship with Jesus Christ. *Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.*⁶⁶ We can also encounter God in the opportunities we have to encounter each other. At the end of the first chapter of the *Rule* we read: *And honor God in one another, because each of you has become his temple.* We encounter God through Christ, each other, scriptures, sacraments, liturgy, prayer, worship and devotional practices.⁶⁷ We learn that we can encounter God in sharing every aspect of our life in common. The dining room table, the altar, the chapel, the chapter room, the recreation room, the library and the kitchen are all places in our houses that possess the potentiality of encountering God

⁶² *virg.* 8.

⁶³ See *reg.* IV, 24.

⁶⁴ *ser.* 169, 18.

⁶⁵ *Const.* 80.

⁶⁶ *DCE* 1.

⁶⁷ See *Const.* Chapter V.

in community life. Our programs of initial formation introduce our candidates to recognize these experiences as opportunities to encounter God and develop in them the skills to share the experiences of encountering God with others. The more we are open to the opportunities to encounter our loving God, *our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself.*⁶⁸ *Then self-abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy (cf. Ps 73 [72]:23-28).*⁶⁹ Our life in common, presents us, as brothers, to become *Sacraments of Christ and the encounter with God.*⁷⁰

2.3. Formation to Interiority

67. One of the themes of Augustine's spirituality is, interiority, that is, the search into one's own heart, one's own interior life, one's own conscience. In the *Confessions* we read: *People set out to wonder at the heights of the mountains, at the mighty waves of the sea, at the broad waterfalls of the rivers, at the vast extent of the ocean, at the movements of the stars. But they pass themselves by.*⁷¹

68. In Augustine's *Rule* we discover the transition from *exteriority* to *interiority* no less than seven times: from verbal prayer to prayer of the heart, from physical hunger to hunger for the word of God, from not pleasing by clothes to pleasing by our inner way of life, from seeing to desiring, from a physical wound to a wound in the heart, from appearances to the inner clothing of the heart, from asking forgiveness with words to true forgiveness from the heart. Interiority, however, does not mean superficial introspection, through which our own ego becomes the only object of our concern; this would simply be a kind of narcissism. How could we profit from this? We would be merely closed up in our own small circle. According to Augustine, interiority opens us to the basic principles of morality, to the unmasking of deceptive solutions, and to an honest understanding of our ignorance at the threshold of the unknowable. Self-knowledge means listening to what God has to say about me: *God, speak truthfully in my heart, for you are the only One who speaks so!*⁷² The aim of interiority is not only to achieve the discovery of my true self and my own limitations, but also the discovery of the Other, namely God, and in Him all the others. God does not narrow our heart, but enlarges and broadens it. Being turned toward God never means being turned away from human beings or from the world's problems. Interiority requires quiet, silence, and peace even though distractions are a continuous challenge.

69. Each member of the community has to cultivate the interior life, he must also be encouraged and willing to share with others in the community his search for God. A religious community is by nature based on faith. Faith sharing is more than coming together at the same time, in the same chapel, to recite the same words in our community prayers. To be sure, common prayer and the common celebration of the Eucharist are forms of sharing faith. They are important means of strengthening our own faith and that of our brothers. It is also necessary, however, to be capable of sharing personally with one another the answer to such questions as, "Who is God?", and "How do I encounter God in my life?"

⁶⁸ See *conf.* III, 6, 11.

⁶⁹ *DCE* 17.

⁷⁰ *RdC* 29.

⁷¹ *conf.* X,8,15.

⁷² *conf.* XII,16, 23.

70. To create opportunities for sharing as a faith community on a personal level, occasions are to be created to gather together for discussions on faith. This can be done through *lectio divina*, with Scripture, or from the writings of Augustine, or from some other author. A part of each house chapter could be dedicated to sharing our faith life as individuals and as community. Along with the routine of sharing meals, recreation, and life in common, days of recollection, retreat or chapters of renewal also provide a good opportunity for such faith sharing to take place.⁷³

2.4. Formation to Prayer

71. Prayer is, of course, an indispensable way of encountering God. It is not the purpose of this document to give a complete summary of Augustine's teaching on prayer, however, the basic law of all prayer is expressed in the *Rule*: *When you pray to God in psalms and songs, the words spoken by your lips should be alive in your hearts.*⁷⁴ The first meaning of this text is that our words must be in harmony with our deeds. *Praise the Lord with all that you are yourselves, for not only your tongue and your voice should praise the Lord, but also your conscience, your life and your deeds... If we never stop living a good life, we praise the Lord unceasingly.*⁷⁵

72. An important aspect of prayer in the Augustinian tradition speaks about the prayer of the heart. In his own characteristic way, Augustine defines prayer as *an exercise of desire.*⁷⁶ As human beings we are not able to pray all the time with words, but we are able to do so by having a longing heart: *Longing is always a prayer, even though the tongue is silent. If you are longing without interruption, then you are always praying. When does our prayer sleep? Only when our desire cools.*⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Augustin emphasizes the necessity of a special time for praying with words.⁷⁸

73. We must also pray through our actions. Augustine expresses this idea with the symbols of tympanum and psalter. Because one plays these instruments with the fingers, they represent action. *Why does the psalmist say: take in hand the tympanum and the psalter? The reason is that, not only may the tongue give praise, but also our works... The same is true for you. When you sing Alleluia, you must give bread to the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the stranger. By doing this, not only does your voice sing, but also your hands will be in harmony with your voice, insofar as your deeds are in accord with your words.*⁷⁹

74. Personal and common prayer are complementary. It would be wrong to conclude from the foregoing considerations that Augustine underestimated common verbal prayer, for in his *Rule* it is even mentioned before personal prayer.⁸⁰ He appreciated the fixed hours and times for community prayer in a well-organized monastic life.⁸¹ By praying with words we keep our yearning from growing slack because of many other cares, apostolates, and activities.⁸² The search for God through prayer must take place both on a personal and a community level. Because of our tradition, which

⁷³ See *Const.* 102.

⁷⁴ *reg.* II, 12.

⁷⁵ *en. Ps.* 148, 2.

⁷⁶ *ep* 130, 8, 17.

⁷⁷ *ser.* 80, 7.

⁷⁸ See *ep* 130, 9, 18.

⁷⁹ *en. Ps.* 149, 8.

⁸⁰ See *reg.* II.

⁸¹ See *op. mon.* 29, 37; *ep.* 130, 9, 18.

⁸² See *RdC* 25.

finds a model in the first Jerusalem community, Augustinians find value in common prayer. It is also important to stress that good common prayer relies on persons who have learned to pray with their entire hearts. An Augustinian formation program is to include discussions and practices in modeling and developing a fidelity to personal and communal periods of prayer.

3. Sharing the Apostolate in Community

75. Augustine describes three kinds of life: the contemplative life, the active life, and that which has some mixture of the two. He clearly prefers this last one, a mixed form. He teaches that no one ought to be so completely contemplative as not to think of his neighbor's advantage, nor so active as to neglect the contemplation of God. Contemplation consists in investigating or discovering truth, but so conducted that one does not withhold from his brothers or sisters what he has contemplated. It is the compulsion of love that makes us undertake a virtuous activity.⁸³

76. *Apostolic activity flows from Augustinian religious life. Thus candidates are to be initiated into pastoral activity and to participate gradually in carrying out ecclesial activities and social responsibilities, mindful always that formation for these things in the Order requires a concern for the common life.*⁸⁴ Our religious life in communion is the context in which we live our apostolic vocation. Augustine never gave a well determined apostolate to his monks, but they had to assume ministerial tasks in a spirit of humility and ought not to prefer their personal ease or leisure to the needs of the Church.⁸⁵ This means, on the one hand, that we Augustinians cannot base our identity on any specific apostolate and, on the other, that we are always open to new frontiers in pastoral work. Our Augustinian life requires a balance between *otium sanctum* and *negotium iustum*, that is, between contemplation and action.⁸⁶ There exists a tension which should be acknowledged, explored and discussed with our brothers in initial formation. It is a topic which is to be included in all programs of ongoing formation.

3.1. Apostolate as Service for the Salvation Others

77. With regard to apostolic activity, the emphasis must be placed on service, and not on honor. The apostolic life is not a matter of being held in high esteem, but of assuming responsibility, and consequently of being in greater danger.⁸⁷ Augustine's characteristic term for ecclesiastical ministry is *sarcina*, that is, the burden which a soldier had to carry on his back. He feels himself not only responsible for himself, but also for many others. *We are not bishops for our own sakes, but for the sake of others to whom we administer the Lord's word and sacrament.*⁸⁸

Thus Augustine can say to his people: *I am your fellow worker in the Lord's vineyard, your fellow servant, your fellow disciple in the same school of Christ.*⁸⁹ Augustine's understanding of his mission is that it must be for nothing less than the salvation of the people in his care. He found inspiration from 1 Cor 10:33: *not seeking what is beneficial for me, but for many, that they may be saved.* A striking statement is found in one his sermons to the people: *What do I want? What do I wish? What do I desire? Why do I speak? Why do I sit here? Why do I live? Only with this intention, that together*

⁸³ See *de civ. dei* XIX,1-2, 19.

⁸⁴ *Const.* 197; See also *Const.* 149.

⁸⁵ See *ep.* 48, 2.

⁸⁶ See *ser.* 104.

⁸⁷ See *ep.* 21, 2.

⁸⁸ *c. Cresc.* II, 11, 13.

⁸⁹ *ser.* 340A, 4.

*we may live with Christ. That is my desire, my honor, my joy, and my wealth... But I don't want to be saved without you.*⁹⁰

3.2. Apostolate and Community

78. Tension is often experienced between the demands of community living and the demands of the apostolate. This is true for two reasons in particular:

- a) In many of our houses, although the number of members is decreasing, the quantity of ministerial demands remains the same, or is even increasing;
- b) in such circumstances some ask if they should not give up community living in favor of the needs of the Church, while some others ask whether they should not abandon certain apostolic activities in favor of community life.

How should we meet this tension? Indeed, we must be at the service of the Church. Our Augustinian charism of community life can serve as a testimony to society that serving each other in family and community and those closest to us is a type of apostolate. Our community living is a form of ministry, if it is lived as Augustine and our tradition teach us. Moreover, this community life is a counter-balance to modern individualism and loneliness, and so it is a service of witness to others.⁹¹ It is not a ministry that is self-serving, but one that is in service for the salvation of others with whom we live and for whom we serve.

3.3. Preparation for the Apostolate: Pastoral Experiences and Academic Studies

79. *During the period of initial formation, Institutes of Consecrated Life do well to provide practical experiences which are prudently followed by the one responsible for formation, enabling candidates to test, in the context of the local culture, their skills for the apostolate, their ability to adapt and their spirit of initiative.*⁹² In order to best prepare for eventual opportunities for pastoral ministry, *the maturation of a religious at this stage will require an apostolic commitment and a progressive participation in ecclesial and social experiences in keeping with the charism of their institute, and taking into account the aptitudes and aspirations of individuals.*⁹³ Having a practical experience of pastoral ministry outside of the formation house during the time of initial formation is important not only for the brothers in initial formation, but also for the solemnly professed brothers living in those communities and serving in various apostolic ministries, so they can get to know our brothers in initial formation as they share their communal and ministerial life with them. The details of how this pastoral experience is accomplished is to be identified and addressed in each Circumscription's *Particular Plan of Formation* paying careful attention to the specific details of place, length of time, type, and supervision.

80. Chapter VII of the *Constitutions* is dedicated to *Studies in the Order*.⁹⁴ This commitment is relevant for both initial and ongoing stages of formation. *Those who wish to enter the Order should acquire the intellectual formation that conforms to the needs of religious life.*⁹⁵ Additionally, *All with a view to the priesthood need to possess at least the capabilities required for young people of their country to undertake university studies.*⁹⁶ Study is an essential formative element in this period and

⁹⁰ *ser.* 17, 2, 2.

⁹¹ See *de civ dei*, XIX, 19.

⁹² *VC* 67.

⁹³ *PI* 62.

⁹⁴ See *Const.* 123-143.

⁹⁵ *Const.* 131; See also *CIC* 652, 659-661; *RFIS* 116-118.

⁹⁶ *Const.* 131; See also *CIC* 234, 2.

constitutes the specific task of the candidates.⁹⁷ Academic preparation is an important aspect that requires serious attention and dedication, it is an essential formative element and is a specific task of the candidates, among other things it constitutes for us a true apostolate. The systematic study of philosophy⁹⁸ and theology⁹⁹ and of other human sciences is always helpful to the life of faith and the work of the apostolate.¹⁰⁰ Regardless of where the philosophical and theological training takes place, all *formandi* are to be provided an Augustinian formation, *marked by the teachings of Saint Augustine, of our scholars and the history of the Order.*¹⁰¹ *Candidates must be helped to acquire serious and orderly study habits in such a way that through a knowledge of philosophy, theology and other human sciences, they will arrive at an authentic understanding of Christ and will be proficient to work in the apostolate.*¹⁰² In fact, at the time of his ordination, Augustine asked for several months in order to study Holy Scripture, so that he can learn practical norms for working with his people.¹⁰³ We see here that the knowledge of Holy Scripture was a critical aspect of his ministerial formation. We must immediately add to his thirst for knowledge of the Bible, a thirst for study in the broadest sense of the word.

81. The Episcopal Conferences of many countries have published a *Plan for Priestly Formation* in which is included a complete plan of what is to be studied during the years of initial formation for those preparing for a life of ordained ministry. These plans are to be reviewed by all involved in initial formation, both formators and *formandi*, and adopted and applied to the *Particular Plan of Formation* for those circumscriptions to which these *Plans for Priestly Formation* apply.

82. Reading and study were for Augustine essential aspects for contemplation and at the same time they are indispensable requirements for preparation for the apostolate and community life. If our relationship with God is not nourished, we cannot hope to have a fruitful relationship with people. Augustine preached about the relationship between contemplation and active ministry using the gospel story of the Transfiguration. [Peter] *liked the solitude of the mountain, and he experienced repugnance in being with the crowd...* [But the Lord answered:] *Go down, Peter! You may want to rest on the mountain, but go down and preach the message. Welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, reprove and appeal, but do all with patience and with the intention of teaching. Toil and labor in the sweat of your brow, suffer torture, so that through the influence and beauty of your work of love, you may obtain what you have understood in the radiant clothes of the Lord.*¹⁰⁴

3.4. Variety of Apostolic Activities

83. Augustine was aware of the social aspects of apostolic activity. Apostolic work, however, does not consist only in giving to other people. Those involved in ministry also receive from those they serve, even from the most destitute. Augustine declares: *Nobody may say: I give, he receives... Perhaps your need is greater than his. He needs bread, you need integrity. He is in want of a roof, you are in want of heaven. His need is for money, yours for justice.*¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ See *Const.* 194; *PDV* 51; *OT* 16.

⁹⁸ See *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy.*

⁹⁹ See *VG* 69-76; See also *VG Norms of Application Part II Sec. I.*

¹⁰⁰ See *PDV* 51-56; *Const.* 123-143.

¹⁰¹ *Const.* 132.

¹⁰² *Const.* 194; See also *PDV* 51-54.

¹⁰³ See *ep.* 21, 6.

¹⁰⁴ *ser.* 78, 3-6.

¹⁰⁵ *ser.* 239, 4, 4.

To be sure, there is a great variety of apostolic activities. They will differ from one circumscription to another, from one country to another. Even in one house people will assume different tasks in a variety of areas. *We should take the necessary steps to acquire an adequate knowledge of the needs of this world and explore ways of manifesting solidarity with those in need.*¹⁰⁶ The candidates in initial formation are to be introduced to the variety of ministerial possibilities through pastoral experience and, when possible, visits with friars actively involved in a variety of ministry. The *Constitutions* address our various ministries: Pastoral/Parochial,¹⁰⁷ Educational,¹⁰⁸ Missionary,¹⁰⁹ Ecumenism, Inter-religious, Inter-Cultural Dialogue,¹¹⁰ and Social Apostolates.¹¹¹ The needs of the church and society will determine the forms of our apostolate. In order to make the best decisions for apostolates we should study the situation of the world around us, as well as the situation of the Church in the different parts of today's world. Whatever the situation may be, the Augustinian apostolate is to be performed expertly, with understanding and respect for each one's work, and with the support and encouragement of the whole community.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ *Const.* 146.

¹⁰⁷ See *Const.* 151-160.

¹⁰⁸ See *Const.* 161-166.

¹⁰⁹ See *Const.* 167-175.

¹¹⁰ See *Const.* 176-181.

¹¹¹ See *Const.* 182-185.

¹¹² See *Const.* 148-149.

*In as much as the formation of candidates aims
at an integral development of the person,
it must be one that is human, Christian, affective,
intellectual, religious, and Augustinian,
as well as apostolic and pastoral.
(Constitutions, 192)*

PART IV: STAGES OF FORMATION

84. Formation for religious life in the Augustinian community is of the greatest importance for every one of the brothers and for the very well-being of the Order. Presently, initial formation includes the periods of pre-novitiate, novitiate, and simple profession, however, the *Constitutions* of the Order consider the possibility of an earlier stage of Aspirancy or Minor Seminary.¹ Formation is to take place in a gradual and systematic way. This formation is always to be carried out in the context of the shared life, faith, and apostolate of the community, which constitute the very substance of the Augustinian community.²

85. The vocation director or member of the vocation team shall accompany each applicant in discerning his vocation to our Augustinian way of life. There is to be a program of spiritual accompaniment and time spent with a community as part of that process. As a result of that discernment, the vocations director shall make recommendation to the discerning applicant as to his suitability, and where appropriate, to the Vocations Board and/or the Provincial Council. Those recommendations should include a thorough evaluation of personal background information including: family and peer relationships, academic ability, employment experiences (if applicable), financial responsibility, physical, spiritual and mental health evaluation, spiritual journey and relationship with God, relationship within the church, ministerial experience, and a healthy sense of restlessness. Other factors which the vocation director is to explore include: the applicant's openness to learning and invest himself in an educational process that will require personal growth, maturity and dedication to future service in the Order of St. Augustine; demonstrated stability in employment (for older candidates); demonstrated stability in the education process; demonstrated age-appropriate social skills; and ability to communicate in a mature and responsible way with both men and women, in particular, with the vocation director, other Augustinians, family, friends, and peers. In those special situations where applicants have been part of a formation program or have completed initial formation, profession and/or ordination in another Augustinian circumscription of the Order, or another religious congregation, seminary, diocese or secular institute, attention must be given to Canon Law³ accompanied by a summary of the reasons for departure and an endorsement of the applicant from an official of the previous circumscription, congregation, seminary, diocese or secular institute.

¹ See *Const.* 198.

² See *Dublin Document*, 1974, 34-38.

³ See *CIC* 241 §3, 684-685.

1. Aspirancy

Purpose

86. The purpose of aspirancy is to care for the seeds of a vocation and the preparation for the pre-novitiate and life in community.⁴ Aspirancy can be understood as that period in which an individual, and the Augustinian community, consider a request for admittance into a house of formation. Aspirancy and/or candidacy is equivalent to the pre-candidate stage or the minor seminary in some places or circumscriptions. It is to be distinguished from the period known, in some places, as postulancy.

87. During aspirancy, in addition to providing appropriate intellectual and academic training, students are accompanied in their Christian formation with a view towards the achievement of a healthy and balanced affective and emotional equilibrium.⁵ Where the role of the family is considerably weakened, and the emotional and religious formation of youth is seriously compromised, the minor seminary can make a valuable contribution. All familial and psychological challenges, however, should be adequately attended to and discerned at this initial period of formation.

Means

88. Where the minor seminary exists, the human, religious, and Augustinian formation of the young candidates is to be attended to with great care. Effort is to be made to establish well-prepared and well-integrated formation teams, such as those in the other stages of formation.⁶ These teams are to be under the moderation of the Prior Provincial and his Council. Each seminary will have its own formation program. The final stage of the minor seminary program could be designated as the pre-novitiate period.

89. Our Constitutions require us to give the greatest importance to personal guidance at this stage.⁷ Where possible, professional counseling by experts in the field can be of great advantage to aspirants in their human, social, psycho-sexual and psycho-spiritual development.

90. A principal motivation for aspirancy, where it exists, is to provide support and encouragement to potential candidates. Faith formation through basic elementary catechesis may be necessary for those who come to us with an inadequate religious formation.

Evaluation

91. The main objective of this stage is to assess the discernment of the candidate's vocation to live the religious lifestyle, his growth in his desire to live for others, and his ability to carry this out. The following aspects are also to be evaluated:

- a) The candidate's basic understanding of the Christian life and love for Christ.
- b) Academic performance and achievement according to the ability of the candidate.
- c) Relationship with peers and the formation team.
- d) An appropriate balance, always with due regard to age, in human, affective and social maturity that enables the candidate fit for life in group and community.

⁴ See *Const.* 200.

⁵ See *Const.* 200.

⁶ See *Const.* 212-215.

⁷ See *Const.* 200.

e) Finally, the Christian and vocational response of the candidate must demonstrate a special attraction to our charism so that our lifestyle may be for him a possible choice for his future life plans.

Other Considerations

92. Each circumscription should establish norms in its statutes to govern the aspirancy period⁸ which should be done exclusively in one's home country. Aspirants should have significant and regular opportunities for contact with their families both by frequent communication and visits. They should be encouraged to participate in parish catechetical or liturgical activities, in youth group activities and works of social outreach. Aspirants should be afforded opportunities for familiarity with modern means of communication and educated in their responsible use. The study of a foreign language can be profitably pursued at this level of formation.⁹

2. Pre-Novitiate

Purpose

93. Admission to the pre-novitiate and its program and length are to be governed by the *Particular Plan of Formation* and the statutes of each Circumscription.¹⁰ Ordinarily it is to be a residential program within a community. By way of exception it may be a program of association only, under the responsible direction of one or two of the Friars. The aim of the pre-novitiate is to familiarize gradually both the pre-novitiate candidate with Augustinian community life, and the Augustinian community with the candidate. In this way the candidate should be able to make an unhurried and freely responsible decision to enter the novitiate with such dispositions that allow him to profit from the total novitiate experience in its various dimensions: human formation, interior life, fraternity, and commitment to God and to others.¹¹

94. The pre-novitiate period should help the candidate:

- a) Acquire an initial knowledge of Augustinian community life and make a fundamental choice for that life in the context of his own culture and in friendly surroundings.
- b) Grow in knowledge of self and of God,¹² so that he may develop his awareness of being called, through his practical approach to interiority, openness, and dialogue.

Means

95. Although we are all fellow-disciples and pilgrims in the school of the Lord, one of the Friars will be particularly responsible for helping the candidate open himself more to Christ, understand better what motivates him, know his vocation more clearly, and discern the meaning of his options.

⁸ See *Const.* 198.

⁹ See *Const.* 125; *CGO* 2013, Determinations, 23.

¹⁰ See *Const.* 201.

¹¹ See *RC* 4; *CIC* 597, par. 2.

¹² See *sol.* II,1; *conf.* X,1,1.

96. In keeping with the *Plan* of formation and through the efforts of the above-mentioned Friar, the community should be able to offer the candidate systematic instruction, in order to introduce him to the life of prayer and to the sacramental life.¹³

97. When the pre-novitiate experience is a residential one, within a community, meetings and periodic activities are to be scheduled which will help the candidate grow in his human, Christian, religious, and Augustinian formation. When the pre-novitiate experience is not residential, efforts should be made to achieve similar results in the best way possible, which will facilitate the candidate's gradual integration into the community's life, its celebrations, and its work.

The candidate should be positively encouraged and provided with psychological support so that he can free himself of any past burdens and become open to friendship and dialogue. In this way he can develop his full potential and be better equipped to grow in the service of others.

Evaluation

98. *Since the good of the Order depends especially on the careful selection of candidates, no one is to be admitted hastily into the Order. From the beginning of the time of the pre-novitiate, a careful examination and a psychological evaluation are to be had, respecting the rights of privacy (CIC 220), and accurate information gathered concerning the candidates' right intention and free choice, their spiritual, moral, and intellectual fitness, their sociability, and physical and mental health, certified by the judgment of a reliable physician (see CIC 642).*¹⁴ During the pre-novitiate period, the candidate's progress in the various dimensions of the formation process is to be evaluated through personal interviews, spiritual accompaniment, and in group meetings. In this process the different facets of the candidate's life must always be clearly examined, while maintaining a deep respect for the person and his privacy.

99. Every evaluation is to consider, among other things, the following aspects:

- a) Evaluate the human formation of the candidate in its totality, which would include his family background, his affective growth and his desire to grow in a responsible manner, as demonstrated in his practical attitude toward life.
- b) Observe his capacity for on-going growth in the interior life and in knowledge of Christ and the Gospel, in the context of his day-to-day living and his openness to friendship.
- c) Determine his suitable progress in the life of the community and in his affective and personal integration into that community.
- d) Note his ability to be open to others, to analyze events and self, without going to extremes.
- e) Pay attention to his attitude of generosity towards the brothers and of commitment to the apostolate.

100. Some circumscriptions have found it appropriate and beneficial to provide a distinct program of preparation at the earliest level of formation – whether Aspirancy or Pre-Novitiate for candidates who are discerning a vocation at a more mature age or following some period of professional work in society. These inquirers bring an experience different from others who may be approaching religious life directly after completing their pre-university or university studies. Thus, it can be beneficial in their discernment process to have them devote significant time at this initial stage to personal spiritual accompaniment, spiritual reading and reflection and, particularly, to the sharing of life together in community according to our Augustinian charism. Formation directors are to take particular care that

¹³ See *de doc. chr.* I,10,10; I,34,38; III,9,13.

¹⁴ *Const.* 202. See *RFIS*, 191-196.

these candidates are able to develop an attraction and capacity for communion of life and communion of goods.

3. Novitiate

Purpose

101. The novitiate is a privileged moment of formation in Augustinian religious life.¹⁵ Its basic purpose is to make known and to live out the essential requirements of this life through a personal discovery of Christ, our interior Master.¹⁶ This is to be accomplished in such a manner that, through true conversion and in conformity with Augustine's experience and that of our tradition, the following of Christ becomes the ultimate norm of our religious life.¹⁷

Means

102. The novitiate is an appropriate period in which to dedicate unhurried time to the life of prayer, to fraternal community, and to the practice of the vows, without other tasks getting in the way. *Novices are to be led to cultivate human and Christian virtues; through prayer and self-denial they are to be introduced to a fuller way of perfection; they are to be taught to contemplate the mystery of salvation and to read and meditate on the sacred scriptures; they are to be prepared to cultivate the worship of God in the sacred liturgy; they are to learn a manner of leading a life consecrated to God and humanity in Christ through the evangelical counsels; they are to be instructed regarding the character and spirit, the purpose and discipline, the history and life of the institute; and they are to be imbued with love for the Church and its sacred pastors.*¹⁸ Growth in faith is realized also through the Church's liturgy and the sacraments, especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist, and by frequent retreat days in surroundings where friendship and faith-sharing are experienced, so that the novitiate becomes a truly genuine initiation into Augustinian religious life.

103. In this process the Director of Novices will assist each of the novices in a fraternal manner and will dialogue with them frequently regarding the different aspects of formation.¹⁹ An important means of encouraging all the goals of formation is to facilitate the understanding and experience of the Augustinian religious life by means of classes or individual tasks. These classes or tasks should deal with the Word of God, the liturgy, community life and the life of the apostolate, consecration to God in religious life through the vows, the life and work of St. Augustine, Augustinian spirituality, the history of the Order and of the Circumscriptions, conversion and apostolic commitment in the Augustinian life and its influence in the world today. Where an inter-congregational novitiate program exists, specific Augustinian formation is to be imparted separately.

104. Although the most important asceticism for Augustinians is community life itself when lived in love, we should not overlook a certain simplicity in our lifestyle, a healthy austerity, a sensitive love for community tasks, dedication to personal study, and the other means which Augustine recommends with such human understanding in the *Rule*.

¹⁵ See *Const.* 204-206.

¹⁶ See *ser.* 134,1,1.

¹⁷ See *PC* 2; *CIC* 646; *PI* 45-47.

¹⁸ *CIC* 652, 2.

¹⁹ See *PI* 52; *CIC* 650-652, 1-2.

Evaluation

105. The Director of Novices and his assistants shall make a periodic evaluation of the progress of the novitiate program, of each of the novices, and of the various objectives and goals of formation.

Some aspects to be taken into account in this evaluation are:

- a) Growth in the life of prayer, in faith-sharing, and in the desire to make progress in one's own formation.
- b) Active participation in the life of the community and in its works.
- c) A maturity appropriate to one's age in living the vows.
- d) Evangelical freedom in the face of today's consumerism, and sensitivity in the face of injustice.
- e) Appreciation for the life of the apostolate in community.

4. The time of Simple Profession

Purpose

106. The time of simple profession begins with the religious profession of vows at the end of the novitiate year. During this time, after having professed their vows, the brothers take a more intimate part in a community that shares faith, life, and work, and all that which Augustinian religious life implies. During this period of growth, personal involvement ought to lead to one's unconditional commitment to God in solemn profession and discernment in a concrete way in which each brother is able to participate in pastoral ministry.

Means

107. The principal means of Augustinian formation is the living of our day-to-day common life in a fraternal, dedicated, and joyful manner.²⁰ This includes engaging in the concrete work of the community, as well as in continued faith sharing and fraternal community life, as indicated in our *Constitutions*.²¹ At this stage of formation, prayer should mature as a matter of personal responsibility and allow a greater sharing of faith with the community. Such faith-sharing helps overcome superficiality, individualism, and lack of a sense of community, while it also helps form a true community, which shares its life, faith, study and work, and which does not avoid the realities of life. The formation community is to elaborate an annual program that will indicate the concrete objectives and commitments of the professed brothers in relation to the spiritual life, community life, studies, apostolate, and free time. The program will also detail the schedules of the community and determine those responsible for various common services during the course of the year.

108. The Augustinian community is to be so steeped in fraternal spirit that dialogue and mutual responsibility for forming friendships will flourish. This is the best guarantee for an authentic, ongoing formation in the love of God and in truly human growth. For this reason, a continuing dialogue among all the brothers must be encouraged. In this climate of Augustinian friendship, it is necessary to regularly schedule and maintain personal meetings with the formation personnel concerning vocation, religious consecration, community life and the apostolate, studies, the meaning of the vows, difficulties and tensions, one's personal future, and the practical manner in which each religious can work in the mission of the Church.

²⁰ See *Const.* 189; *Dublin Document*, 82.

²¹ See *Const.* 4-12; 108-119.

- It is fitting that all the important events of the Augustinian community be celebrated properly, both from a liturgical point of view, and with regard for local community and ecclesial custom.²²

- For the purpose of furthering growth in the different aspects of Augustinian religious life and in the actual living of this life, it is fitting that meetings or classes be held with a certain frequency, which allow for an exchange of opinion. These will treat all the important topics that regard formation, such as: Augustinian spirituality and life today, the mission and social teaching of the Church in our present-day world,²³ and other topics that are important for the religious life, as well as for the human and professional formation of the religious.

109. Study and research form part of the most vital and genuine tradition of Augustinian religious life.²⁴ *Those who wish to enter the Order should acquire the intellectual formation that conforms to the needs of religious life (CIC 652, 659-661).*²⁵ Study is at the service of our vocation of following Christ, as it nourish our prayer, our community life and the works of our apostolate. Philosophy, theology and other human sciences should be engaged in as a fundamental means of preparing Augustinian religious, and seen as a true apostolate that will help one's life of faith and apostolic work.²⁶ In particular cases suitable adjustment can be made to this policy by the proper authorities. Preparation in studies, for Augustinian brothers and priests, must bring each student to an authentic knowledge of Christ and to a practical expression of what is learned. Study and research should become for our men in formation an abundant source of growth in the spiritual life and in human enrichment.²⁷

110. *Each circumscription can have its own houses of study for the philosophical and theological training of its candidates, provided there is a sufficient number of professors and students, and unless particular conditions should require otherwise. It is preferable that circumscriptions send their students to philosophical-theological schools of the Order, or to an inter-congregational or diocesan seminary, or to a Catholic university, but always providing for the Augustinian formation of the candidates marked by the teachings of Saint Augustine, of our scholars and the history of the Order.*²⁸ In the same way these formation programs must specify the manner of presenting courses on Justice and Peace in accordance with the *Constitutions* of the Order.²⁹

111. The simply professed brothers are to undertake a gradual pastoral experience with the support of formation personnel and specialists in this area, but without neglecting their studies or program of initial formation to Augustinian community life.³⁰ Along with the regular pastoral experiences as part of the formation of our simply professed brothers, an extended pastoral experience in a community outside of the formation house is recommended.³¹ This experience is to take place both in their own cultural settings as well as in others, in easier situations as well as in those that are more challenging. *In a particular way, consecrated men and women are asked to listen to the voice of the*

²² See *Const.* 103-107.

²³ See *Justice and Peace Manual of the Order of Saint Augustine*, (Especially the sections regarding *Initial and Ongoing Formation*), Rome 2013.

²⁴ See *Const.* 124.

²⁵ *Const.* 131.

²⁶ See *PDV* 51-56; *Const.* 123-143.

²⁷ See *PI* 58; 60-62.

²⁸ *Const.* 132.

²⁹ See *Const.* 184b.

³⁰ See *PI* 62.

³¹ See *OT* 21; *RFIS* 74-76.

*Spirit who calls them to go to the peripheries, to those to whom the Gospel has not yet been proclaimed.*³²

112. It is also important to give special care to the liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist, so that this liturgical life may be lived in all its depth.³³ To help achieve these objectives the brothers are to take part in relevant courses and activities in order to complete their formation.³⁴ The liturgical ministries of *Lector* and *Acolyte* should be appointed according to the norms of Canon Law.³⁵ *It is fitting for lectors and acolytes to be offered concrete ways of exercising the ministries received, not only in the liturgical environment, but also in catechesis, evangelization, and the service of their neighbor.*³⁶

113. We should never forget that the goal of the newly professed brother's religious life during initial formation is to reach the important moment of solemn profession. This solemn profession is an unconditional commitment to God and the Church, to the Order and to the men and women of our time. This perspective, therefore, ought always to be present throughout the time of initial formation, so that the brothers reach their decision for solemn profession through true progress in human and religious growth.

114. So that the temporarily professed brothers may fully profit from their instruction during the time of formation, and may have the necessary qualifications for further study and training, and so that they may acquire the facility for their own ongoing formation in later years, a sufficient level of general education should be required of all candidates. These general requirements for all candidates are to be established in the *Particular Plan of Formation* of each circumscription. For Friars called to ordained ministry, the requirements for diaconal and presbyteral ordination³⁷ and the program for priestly formation established in Canon Law³⁸ and detailed by the regional or national Episcopal Conferences need to be followed and incorporated into the *Particular Plan of Formation*. For those brothers called to live and serve the Church and Augustinian community as religious brothers, practical and pastoral theology is to be offered as a preparation for their ministry. *The first ministry that Brothers develop in the Church as religious is "to remind the baptized of the fundamental values of the Gospel" and "the need to respond with holiness of life to the love of God poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (See: Rom 5:5)."*³⁹ All brothers are to be thoroughly prepared for service in the Order, the Church and the world. With this in mind, their academic education is to be pursued, in keeping with each one's ability, and in view of acquiring appropriate professional, pastoral, or technical qualifications. *Those Institutes that are called "mixed" Institutes, which are referred to in the Apostolic Exhortation 'Vita Consecrata', and which are formed by religious priests and brothers, are encouraged to make further progress in their aim of establishing among their members a way of relating based on equal dignity, without any differences other than those arising from the diversity of their ministries.*⁴⁰

³² Pope Francis, *Message for World Mission Day* 2015.

³³ See *Const.* 53, 92-95.

³⁴ See *PI* 61; *SC* 16, 17.

³⁵ See *MQ*; *CIC* 230, 1035; *De institutione lectoris*; *De institutione acolythi*.

³⁶ *RFIS* 72.

³⁷ See *CIC* 1024-1032.

³⁸ See *CIC* 232-261.

³⁹ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, 7.

⁴⁰ *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*, 39.

Evaluation

115. The formation team should encourage personal and community evaluation, with a frequency to be determined by the Director or by the team itself. This evaluation is to take place in an atmosphere that reflects friendship, dialogue, and mutual responsibility, all of which should characterize the whole of Augustinian formation. In preparing this evaluation they are to consider different aspects of religious life, especially community life, maturity in human development, prayer, the apostolate, study, the vows, one's sense of commitment to God and to others. This sense of commitment must be lived by each brother, not in a routine or impersonal way, but with personal conviction and with love for community life.

116. A significant time in the life of a Friar is the transition from living in a house of formation to living in a community involved in active ministry. One of the means adopted in recent years to assist young religious at this particular juncture in life has been the preparation period immediately preceding the profession of solemn vows. This is an opportune moment in which to devote special time and attention to a more intense consideration of the decisive step of full and final incorporation into Augustinian religious life. The experience of programs introduced for such a preparatory period in recent years has proven valuable and appreciated by participants where it has occurred.

5. Ongoing Formation

Purpose

117. Ongoing formation finds its basic meaning in the need to nourish and revitalize the grace of one's vocation. It is necessary that each one of us work carefully at this renewal.⁴¹ As Augustine reminds us: *If, though, you say, "That's enough, that's the lot," then you've even perished. Always add some more, always keep on walking, always forge ahead. Don't stop on the road...*⁴² This is why we must constantly stir up our spiritual life, find renewed meaning each day in our common life and fraternity, and renew untiringly our mission of proclaiming the Gospel. Ongoing formation is essential if initial formation is not to wear thin or become a passing and ineffectual means of following Christ and of being faithful to the Spirit in the Augustinian Order.⁴³

118. Each Friar must be fully aware that renewal and formation are a lifetime challenge.⁴⁴ There is no substitute for this if a person is to remain faithful to the Spirit, regardless of the difficulties of the times, the rapid changes of our world, new situations, a new human, religious culture, and the new tasks that are asked of priests, religious, and all Christians. From this it is clear that ongoing formation must include all the important aspects of our human and religious life. Ongoing formation must lead us to live out our work and give it religious significance. In this way we will find a true contemplative dimension in that work, and we will know how to profit from all the possibilities that arise, filled with a true desire for renewal.

⁴¹ See *Const.* 23-24.

⁴² *ser.* 169,15,18.

⁴³ See *Const.* 216-217.

⁴⁴ See *PI* 66-71; *PC* 11, 18; *CL* 63.

Means

119. a) The most important means of ongoing formation is a steady and meaningful participation in the life of one's own community and Circumscription. This is accomplished by the friar's presence at religious celebrations, in the tasks of the community, and in the community's leisure time. In this way he will be led to share all his material and spiritual goods in the authentic life, faith, and work of the community.⁴⁵
- b) In the same way we must live our apostolic commitment as an important means of our sanctification. This requires us to dedicate sufficient time to the preparation of our apostolic work, especially in what regards the service of the Word of God, our openness with the people and with those engaged with us in the same works of the apostolate.⁴⁶
- c) Equally important for us are an annual retreat and periodic days of recollection, to be held at least in the special liturgical seasons.⁴⁷
- d) We should also take part in ongoing formation courses on the circumscriptional or regional level, or as sponsored by the Order through the Institute of Augustinian Spirituality.⁴⁸ A friar is to be appointed from each circumscription for the coordination of such programs.⁴⁹ These provide us with the opportunity to renew ourselves on the human and spiritual plane, in social charity and in our particular charism.

120. Each of us must remember that we are the first ones responsible for our formation, maturity, and human-vocational growth. No one else can take our place in this task. All dimensions of life should be periodically reviewed in programs of continual formation. Of specific importance for religious are the dimensions that are human, fraternal, apostolic, cultural, professional and those that are proper to the charism of the religious institute.⁵⁰

121. It is necessary to devote time to continual formation and in this way try to prevent difficulties or confront them as they may arise with the passing of the years. We accomplish this in the first stages of religious and apostolic life through personal reflection, fraternal gatherings, supporting one another, spiritual accompaniment, and in other ways that allow a suitable growth of our interior life and our sense of religious belonging. In our mature years we need to facilitate a renewal that counters the dangers of individualism, indifference, resignation, exaggerated conflicts, bitterness or burn-out from work, or other crises proper to this period. All of this demands spiritual and human support from the community and one's superiors. Similarly, those who are advanced in age need to continue developing a generous spirit and a wholistic vision of their lives, so that they may be able to take care of their health, as well as maintain fraternal relationships, religious and priestly friendships, love for others, and enthusiasm for life. In this way they will be able to face retirement, old age, and illness with the guarantees that come from faith, love and hope.

a) It is also necessary that leisure times be set aside by the individual and the community, which allow one to see the whole of their life and regain control of it. As St. Augustine reminds us: *The attraction of a life of leisure ought not to be the prospect of lazy inactivity, but the chance for the investigation and discovery of truth.*⁵¹

b) It is important that the friars periodically devote time to the reading of the classics of our Augustinian spirituality, beginning with the works of St. Augustine, the *Rule*, and our *Constitutions*, viewed as a spiritual book. In our reading we should also include Augustinian

⁴⁵ See *Const.* 109.

⁴⁶ See *Dublin Document*, 83-84.

⁴⁷ See *Const.* 102.

⁴⁸ See CGO 2013, 19.

⁴⁹ See *Const.* 217.

⁵⁰ See *VC* 71.

⁵¹ *de civ. dei* XIX, 19.

mystics, exemplary people gifted with a special wisdom in this field of history and spirituality of our Order, and also modern authors of theology, spirituality, formation, pastoral activity, and Augustinian charism.

c) To develop one's sense of belonging, it is appropriate to celebrate with true affection, and in a human, liturgical and fraternal manner, the feast days and special events of the Order, the Circumscription and the Community.

122. Major superiors and the local prior are to be concerned for the health of the Friars of all ages. *So that they may bear their difficulties more patiently and more fruitfully, we should show the greatest concern and fraternal love in the care of the sick and the aged, for in them we serve Christ.*⁵² Their concern should extend also to personal and religious fulfillment. The entire community should attend with the greatest sensitivity to those brothers who are experiencing various difficulties, whether they be in their first years in community, in their mature years, or in old age. The community should support them by recognizing their successes and celebrating the important moments of their lives. Likewise, the community should make available to the brother special and even professional means of evaluation, when he needs this or it is considered opportune.

123. It is also fitting that the circumscriptions make available places of retreat, rest, and rehabilitation. These places permit the brothers to renew themselves in moments of crisis, fatigue, or difficulty. They also are of great help when the simple need arises to pause along the way and spend some time on spiritual, community and pastoral renewal.

124. In what concerns our young religious, both they and their Major Superiors must give special attention to fraternal support, spiritual accompaniment, and the organization of gatherings appropriate for religious of that age. *Special attention should be given to those who have recently concluded the process of initial formation. There shall be friars to accompany them and gatherings should be held for them.*⁵³

Evaluation

125. The local or provincial chapters or the Prior General and council will evaluate this entire process of ongoing formation and see that it is properly carried out. Contributions from experts and those working in formation is also to be sought in making this evaluation and updating the program of ongoing formation elaborated in each circumscription's *Particular Plan of Formation*. These contributions will aid in addressing the constantly changing challenges of our times.

⁵² *Const.* 121.

⁵³ *Const.* 217.

*Thus a person who is consecrated in the name of God
and is vowed to God, insofar as he dies to
the world so that he may live for God,
is himself a sacrifice. (City of God, X, 6)*

PART V: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN FORMATION

126. The complexity and richness of culture, custom, history, family structures and background, along with the international dynamic of our Order provides fertile ground for both opportunities and challenges in the process of initial and ongoing formation in religious life. There has been a rapid growth in our world which can develop a culture of disposability, unlimited opportunity, lack of permanent commitment, distraction, immediate gratification, and ego-centrism to name but a few. The intention of this part of the *Ratio Istitutionis* is to introduce some of the opportunities and challenges in a general way so that they may be further developed in the *Particular Plan of Formation* for each circumscription.¹ We must keep in mind that what is seen as a challenge for one circumscription may be seen as an opportunity for another. What is most important in the formation process is for both the formator and the formandi to understand that formation is a process of accompaniment as one develops in maturity. *Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the fact that such maturity will never be completely free of difficulties and tensions, which require interior discipline, a spirit of sacrifice, acceptance of struggle and of the Cross, and the entrusting of oneself to the irreplaceable assistance of grace.*²

Technology³

127. The greatest improvement in communication has the potential to threaten the heart of Augustinian common life. With the rapid development of technology, especially in the area of social communication, there has been a dramatic increase in individualism and isolation in the ways in which we are able to live and communicate with each other. The ease of sending electronic messages is effective in terms of transmitting information, but these means should never replace person to person communication. The core of Augustinian community and friendship is based on *the charms of talking and laughing together and kindly giving way to each other's wishes, reading elegantly written books together, sharing jokes and delighting to honor one another, disagreeing occasionally but without rancor...Such signs of friendship sprang from the hearts of friends who loved and knew their love returned, signs to be read in smiles, words, glances and a thousand gracious gestures. So were sparks kindled and our minds were fused inseparable, out of many becoming one.*⁴

128. A challenge to community life and formation is found in the attractive power of personal computers and the internet. This technology can attract a friar, or anyone for that matter, to retreat to his room and enter into a virtual world in order to communicate through the various forms of social networking, watch videos, surf the net, play virtual games with distant friends or anonymous competitors, shop, read, research, study, or update oneself on current events through numerous news outlets. These actions are not, *de facto*, challenges to community life. In fact, they can be efficient

¹ See *Const.* 190.

² *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, 9.

³ See LS 102, 112, 136; *The Church and Internet; Ethics in Internet*, Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Vatican City, 2002.

⁴ *conf.* IV, 8, 13.

and healthy means of communication, entertainment, and study. They become challenges when they begin to distract the friar and replace the necessary aspect of being present to each other in community and sharing a common life together. For a growing number of people, especially those of a younger generation, the use of the internet can develop into an unhealthy addiction or dependence which must be treated. This dependence can disrupt or prevent normal and healthy sleep patterns which, in turn, affect one's ability to be present at common acts of prayer, work, study or recreation. The response to such addictions is not to forbid the use of the internet, this merely suppresses the desire and does not treat the addiction. It is to be addressed in a fraternal, and at times, professional way with each person with honesty and brotherly care and concern.

Addictions and unhealthy dependencies

129. All addictions or unhealthy dependencies which abuse the body and mind are contrary to the care we are entrusted to give the *imago dei* in which we have been created and the direction St. Augustine gives in the *Rule of mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you have become*.⁵ Recent experiences in formation have surfaced various addictions that must be addressed in a mature, healthy and fraternal way. These addictions or dependencies have drastic effects on the corporal, psychological and spiritual health of the candidate in formation, the individual friar, as well as the local and formation community. Addictions or disorders cannot be ignored because they will not simply take care of themselves. Some of the recent challenges include: alcohol, drugs, pornography, compulsive shopping, eating disorders, body worship, sexual activity, gambling, or irresponsible social networking. Many times, the addictive behavior concerns only one of these areas. At other times, there are multiple addictions occurring simultaneously. Whether individually or simultaneously, they are to be addressed professionally and fraternally. In the training which our formators receive, there is to be ample time dedicated to address how to identify and address these addictive and disordered behaviors in themselves and in the candidates in formation.

Fractures in Family Life

130. Although statistics vary among nations, there seems to be a general increase in the complexity of family dynamics and fractures in family life. These complexities and fractures leave imprints on the affective memory of the candidates. Many times, the emotions that accompany those memories are transferred to formation directors who may be seen as taking on the role of a parental figure. In fact, the relationship one has with one's parents influences the relationship between the candidate in formation and his director. *It is not enough for the formation director to note what happened in the life of the young person; what counts is the emotions those events caused in the psyche, emotions that can be positive or negative, perhaps feelings of acceptance or rejection, of fear for the future, optimism, resentment, reconciliation; a desire for revenge or an inability to live with tension*.⁶ Issues of parental separation, divorce, remarriage, and the living situations and complex family dynamics that accompany such events can be challenges in the process of initial formation.

The difficult experiences in family life need to be addressed at times by professionals. Additionally, formators are to receive training in how to respond to the needs of the formandi who may be struggling with the effects of such difficulties. The formandi are to receive *a more extensive interdisciplinary, and not merely doctrinal, formation in the areas of engagement and marriage. Their training does not always allow them to explore their own psychological and affective background and experiences. Some come from troubled families, with absent parents and a lack of emotional stability. There is a*

⁵ reg. I, 9.

⁶ A. Cencini, *I sentimenti del figlio*, Bologna 1998, 91.

*need to ensure that the formation process can enable them to attain the maturity and psychological balance needed for their future ministry.*⁷

Sexual integration

131. The power of the libido can have subtle and overt influences on the human person. Learning how to integrate one's sexuality can be challenging at all ages. A variety of factors makes this integration even more challenging for young adults. Professional workshops and community discussions at all levels of formation assist the formators and formandi to address these challenges in a mature and fraternal way. Even though statistics will vary depending upon country, culture, family of origin, and personality, it cannot be assumed that the candidates entering our formation programs, no matter what age, have a healthy, Catholic foundation of human sexuality. Nor can it be assumed that they are entering formation without previous sexual activity.

132. Each member of the formation community will have a different level of comfort in discussing issues of sexual integration, affectivity, and intimacy. These comfort levels are influenced by family of origin, culture, experience, maturity, and other factors. They are always to be respected but should not be used to avoid the necessary discussions. Formators are to be trained in how to discuss issues of sexuality with the men in formation so that this topic is not avoided or simply assumed that everyone has the same understanding of what it means to be a chaste, celibate man.⁸ *A balanced affectivity, especially sexual balance, which presupposes the acceptance of the other, man or woman, respecting his or her own difference*⁹ is a necessary component in a mature sexual integration. *Since the observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deepest instincts of human nature, candidates should neither present themselves for nor be admitted to the vow of chastity, unless they have been previously tested sufficiently and have been shown to possess the required psychological and emotional maturity.*¹⁰

133. Male religious community life includes acknowledging the distinct dynamic that exists in an all-male living environment and can be studied, examined and researched on sociological, psychological, theological, spiritual and anthropological levels. Men living in a formation community should acknowledge the reality in which they live and be given the opportunity to discuss this reality, including the struggles, in a respectful, safe and honest environment. The vow of living a chaste, celibate life can bring challenges which need respect. One of the important tasks of initial formation is to assist the candidate in reaching a state of affective maturity. *Education for responsible love and the affective maturity of the person are totally necessary for those who... are called to celibacy, that is, to offer with the grace of the Spirit and the free response of one's own will the whole of one's love and care to Jesus Christ and to his Church. In view of the commitment to celibacy, affective maturity should bring to human relationships of serene friendship and deep brotherliness a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ.*¹¹

⁷ AL 203.

⁸ See RFIS 199-201.

⁹ PI 43.

¹⁰ PC 12.

¹¹ PDV 44.

134. *Chastity for the Kingdom, in fact, is much more than the simple lack of sexual relationships.*¹² This tendency can lead to an unhealthy compartmentalizing of the multi-faceted dynamic of sexual identity. Honest discussions regarding living the vow of chastity in the initial stages of formation assist the candidates in discerning their vocation to living the vowed life. Forming a person to value the virtue of chastity *is inseparable from efforts to cultivate all the other virtues and, in a particular way, Christian love, characterized by respect, altruism and service, which after all is called charity.*¹³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that, *Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.*¹⁴ All the baptized are called to live this virtue of chastity and sexual integration according to their particular state of life. Acknowledging it as a virtue and accepting it as a gift and commitment to love, assists those called to live this virtue as a professed religious to be authentic in their commitment.

In recent years there has been growing public discussion of sexual identity. Among the categories of sexual identity most often present in discussion are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and transgender identity.¹⁵ It is recommended that the contemporary challenges and questions with regard to affective maturity and the healthy integration of Christian sexual identity be included in the discussions and decisions regarding the suitability of candidates for ordained ministry and to live the vowed life.¹⁶ These are to be discussed at the leadership level of each circumscription, among vocation directors, and with the formators and the men in our formation communities.

Number of Candidates

135. The number of candidates in each year of the formation program varies according to each circumscription. The challenges exist when the numbers are too large for the formation program to accommodate the qualified candidates, or too small for a distinct formation program to support one or two candidates. The challenge of small numbers is magnified especially in the novitiate. *So that the novices can experience a full community life, the novitiate is ordinarily to have at least three novices.*¹⁷ Developing a common novitiate experience for circumscriptions with smaller numbers is not as simple as placing the novices in a common house. One of the largest challenges pertains to language. The novitiate year is not the opportunity to learn a new language. *The time of the novitiate ...is to be devoted solely to the task of formation and consequently novices are not to be occupied with studies and functions which do not directly serve this formation.*¹⁸ Before a candidate is accepted into the novitiate, *it is particularly necessary that future novices attain a facility in the language used in the novitiate.*¹⁹ Because of the intensity of the year, the novice, ideally, should participate in a novitiate experience in his native language, or at least in a language in which he is proficient in reading, speaking and listening. In circumscriptions where the number of qualified applicants exceeds the capacity of the physical structure of the house or financial resources, it is important to develop

¹² *Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, 8.

¹³ *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality (Guidelines for Education within the Family)*, 55.

¹⁴ CCC 2337.

¹⁵ See “*Male and Female He Created Them*”: *Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, 20-22.

¹⁶ See *Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*; CIC 241,1; CIC 1029, PDV 66; OT 6; PC 12; *Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutionis Sacerdotalis* 199-201.

¹⁷ *Const.* 206.

¹⁸ *CIC* 652, 5.

¹⁹ *PI* 43.

among a variety of circumscriptions, opportunities for sharing physical, human and financial resources.²⁰

Age of the Candidates

136. In some of our circumscriptions, men are requesting admittance into the Order after having had a number of years of work or ministerial experience. Creating an initial formation community that integrates candidates of diverse ages and experience can be a challenge for the formators and also the formandi. Age appropriate maturity levels will differ according to the age of the candidate.²¹ If not addressed personally and as a group, tensions and unmet expectations may result within the community dynamic. The value of all candidates benefiting from the experience of living in a formation community must be balanced with the need and experience of the older candidates. Some men are seeking admission to the Augustinian Order after years of work experience and/or ordained ministerial experience as diocesan priests or solemnly professed religious or priests from other congregations or orders. A formation program that acknowledges their maturity and experience and insists on an integral Augustinian formation, needs careful thought and development.

Protection of minors and vulnerable adults

137. In all levels of initial formation, the reality of sexual abuse is to be addressed and discussed in personal meetings with the formators and also in community meetings. In all activities undertaken by the Augustinians, the paramount concern for each Friar is always the safety, well-being and protection of all children and vulnerable adults. Whether it is the classroom, parish, hospital, or any setting, every Friar is to be trained on child sexual abuse prevention and is to participate in training in initial formation and ongoing education which further informs and reminds him of the importance of appropriate contact with minors and adults.²²

Many national episcopal conferences and dioceses have mandatory training for all people working directly with children. Education programs are established for the protection of children, minors and vulnerable adults and is to be integrated into the formation program at each level. Candidates, who have experienced abuse, and who enter the vocational discernment process, will need specialized attention and accompaniment before admittance to the pre-novitiate level. The *Particular Plan of Formation* of each circumscription is to address how education programs regarding sexual abuse prevention are integrated into the formation program at each stage. Within each circumscription, the protocol addressing the Prevention and Reporting of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Vulnerable Adults is to include a clear policy for prevention and reporting harassment and abuse in our houses of initial formation and should be shared with the formators and the formandi.

Assistance to Family Members

138. When a candidate joins the Augustinian community, he enters a period of formation in a new religious family. While developing new relationships and entering the learning process on how to integrate the evangelical counsels into his new life situation, he does not renounce his family of origin. Maintaining family relationships and forming new relationships in the community requires a prudent and patient balance in all aspects that concern both old and new relationships. In a growing number of cases, the candidates who would like to begin formation find themselves in situations of being the only economic and emotional support of part, or sometimes, of their entire family of origin. Accepting

²⁰ See *CGO* 2013, 22.

²¹ See *Const.* 192.

²² *RFIS* 202.

a candidate in this situation can create a problem both for the potential candidate, for his family, for the formator, for the local community and for the Order. The vocational team, the potential candidate and the other parties involved must speak about and clarify the challenges and expectations before the candidate's possible entry, so that disappointment, confusion, stress and frustration are not created. Once candidates enter formation, the evangelical councils will prevent them from continuing to offer the same level of support. While acknowledging that there may be emergency situations that require immediate attention and help, we must remember that the structures that support the Augustinian lifestyle do not allow us to maintain a constant level of support, financial or otherwise, to the family of origin of our brothers.

Multi-Cultural Houses of Formation

139. In recent years, many of our houses of formation, especially at the level of the novitiate, have developed into inter-circumscriptional common projects. Many times, this brings an international and intercultural aspect to the house of formation that should be addressed. While respecting the specific geographic culture of these inter-circumscriptional communities, there is to be open dialogue and effort made to include, respect, and celebrate the customs and cultures of all the members of the community. The variety in music, prayer style, art, liturgy, language and food are some of the many areas where risks, challenges, benefits and opportunities can be discussed and incorporated into the community. Integration of cultures into the initial formation community provides an opportunity for the whole community to share, learn and celebrate the diversity of our international Order while being witnesses to the centrality of the one Body of Christ in Augustinian formation so that *united harmoniously in brotherhood and spiritual friendship, we seek and worship God and work for the service of his people.*²³

²³ *Const.* 13.

ABBREVIATIONS AND DOCUMENTS CITED

- CIC *Codex Iuris Canonici* 1983
CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1997
Const. *Constitutions O.S.A.* 2008
CGO *Capitulum Generale Ordinarium* Ordinary General Chapter
CGI *Capitulum Generale Intermedium* Intermediate General Chapter

Vatican II

- SC *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy December 1963
LG *Lumen Gentium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church November 1964
PC *Perfectae Caritatis* Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life October 1965
GS *Gaudium et Spes* Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World December 1965

Paul VI

- OT *Optatam Totius* Decree on Priestly Training October 1965
PP *Populorum Progressio* Encyclical Letter on the Development of Peoples March 1967
MQ *Ministeria Quaedam* Apostolic Letter on the Reform of the Discipline of Tonsure, Minor orders and Sub-deacon in the Latin Church August 1972

John Paul II

- MD *Mulieris Dignitatem* Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women August 1988
CL *Christifideles Laici* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Laity December 1988
RM *Redemptoris Missio* Encyclical Letter on the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate December 1990
CA *Centesimus Annus* Encyclical Letter on the 100th Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* May 1991
PDV *Pastores Dabo Vobis* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day March 1992
VC *Vita Consecrata* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World March 1996
FR *Fides et Ratio* Encyclical Letter on the Relationship between Faith and Reason Sept. 1998

Benedict XVI

- DCE *Deus Caritas Est* Encyclical Letter on Christian Love Dec. 2005
CV *Caritas in Veritate* Encyclical Letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth June 2009

Francis

- EG *Evangelii Gaudium* Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World November 2013
LS *Laudato si'* Encyclical Letter on Care for our Common Home May 2015
AL *Amoris Laetitia* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family March 2016
VG *Veritatis Gaudium* Apostolic Constitution on Ecclesial Universities and Faculties January 2018
Message for World Mission Day, January 2015

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA)

- RC *Renovationis Causam* Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Formation January 1969
PI *Potissimum Institutioni* Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes February 1990
VFC *Fraternal Life in Community* "Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor" February 2002

RdC *Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the 3rd Millennium* May 2002
FT *The Service of Authority and Obedience “Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram”* May 2008
Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life August 2014
Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church October 2015

Congregation for Catholic Education

Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders November 2005
Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood June 2008
Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy January 2011
“Male and Female He Created Them” : Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education February 2019

Congregation for the Clergy

RFIS *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis (The Gift of the Priestly Vocation)* December 2016

Pontifical Council for the Family

The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Guidelines for Education within the Family December 1995

Pontifical Council for Culture

Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture May 1999

Synod of Bishops

Instrumentum Laboris of the Synod of Bishops on The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith 2012
Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment 2018

Order of Saint Augustine

Dublin Document, CGI 1974
Final Document CGO 1989, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2013
Justice and Peace Manual of the Order of Saint Augustine, Rome 2013

Works of St. Augustine

reg. *Regula* (Rule of St. Augustine)
c. Cresc. *Contra Cresconium* (Against Cresconius)
conf. *Confessiones* (Confessions of St. Augustine)
de civ. dei *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God)
de doc. chr. *De Doctrina Christiana* (On Christian Teaching)
div. qu. *De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus* (On Eighty-Three Different Questions)
ep. Io. tr. *In epistulam Ioannis ad Parthos tractatus* (Tractate on the First Letter of John)
en. Ps. *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (Expositions on the Psalms)
ep. *Epistulae* (Letters)

exp. Gal.	<i>Expositio epistulae ad Galatas</i> (On the Letter to the Galatians)
Io. ev. tr.	<i>In Ioannis evangelium tractatus</i> (Tractate on the Gospel of John)
mag.	<i>De magistro</i> (The Teacher)
op. mon.	<i>De opera monachorum</i> (On the Works of Monks)
ser.	<i>Sermones</i> (Sermons)
sol.	<i>Soliloquiorum</i> (Soliloquies)
trin.	<i>De Trinitate</i> (On the Trinity)
virg.	<i>De sancta virginitate</i> (On Virginity)

Other

vita Aug.	<i>Vita Augustini</i> (The Life of Augustine)
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