

# FINAL DOCUMENT

## CEVIM MEETING FOR MISSIONARIES ENGAGED IN FORMATION

Rome, 17-21 January 2008

### Introduction

With the support of the CEVIM (Conference of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission of Europe y Middle East), during the days 17 to 21 of January 2008, we held in Rome (CASA Maria Immacolata) a meeting for confreres engaged in formation.

The participants were: Francesco Gonella (Turin); Barta Szabolcs (Hungary); Dario Gbrac (Slovenia); Jozef Mrocek and Frantisek Honisek (Slovakia); David Carmona and Wilson Sitchon (Zaragoza); José Manuel Villar and David Fernández (Salamanca); Felipe Nieto (Madrid); Juan Carlos Cerquera (Colombia/Naples); Ján Martinec (St. Cyril and Methodius); Adam Bandura and Mariusz Zygadlo (Poland); Angelo Marras and Giuseppe Testa (Rome); José Ignacio Caamaño and Aser Ansia (Barcelona); Ramzi Greige (Middle East); Roberto Gómez (Paris-Toulouse); Nicola Albanesi, Giuseppe Turati, Eugenio Gioia and Corpus Delgado (CEVIM Committee); Kasimierz Stelmach, Julio Suescun (translators).

The objectives of the meeting were clearly stated in the documentation sent to each Province: **Formation – information – action.**

The *formation* of the meeting by way of lectures (some of them given in the conference hall, others given in writing and studied personally) gave us some points of reference for our work in formation:

1. Formation today in the recent documents of the Church (Alberto Vernaschi, c.m.).
2. The basic dimensions of the process of formation (Pierpaolo Triani).
3. The process of formation in consecrated life (Amedeo Cencini)
4. Historical evolution of formation in the Vincentian charism in the C.M. (Luigi Mezzadri, c.m.)
5. Formation in the Constitutions and in the Statutes of the C.M. (Corpus Delgado, c.m.).
6. The Ratio CM for the Internal Seminary (1983) and for the Major Seminary (1988): a formation journey for the Mission (Salvatore Farí, c.m.).

*Information* was abundantly given in the **communications** of the participants about their own experiences and about the steps followed by the different Provinces. This information was focused on:

1. The **state of formation in each Province**: projects, developments, persons.
2. The **dimensions of formation**, according to the Ratio of the C.M. and the experiences of the past years: human formation (presented by Giuseppe Turati, c.m.); intellectual formation (presented by Giuseppe Testa, c.m.); spiritual formation (presented by Ramzi Greige, c.m.); apostolic formation (presented by Adam Bandura, c.m.); formation for community life (presented by Roberto Gómez). An enriching dialogue followed each presentation.
3. The **Vincentian axis** of the formation was studied by the three language groups (French, Spanish and Italian).

The *action* of the meeting took the shape of a **Forum** for the different areas of interest, that had the task to draft a final document with the proposals coming from the meeting, to be sent to the Visitors.

The opening Eucharist was presided by Franc Card. Rodé. The Superior General shared with us his thoughts about the C.M. during one of the sessions and presided the Eucharist on the second day of our meeting. On Sunday we went to the community of Trivigliano “comunità in dialogo” and also we had the opportunity to see the sources of Western religious life, in Subiaco. The Province of Rome, that generously coordinated the services, also prepared for us an unforgettable visit to the excavations in St Peter’s, at the Vatican.

The fraternal climate, the well organized celebrations and the exchange that went over the barriers of the different languages have accompanied us throughout our meeting.

## I.- THE STATE OF FORMATION IN OUR PROVINCES

During the meeting we shared some information about the state of formation in our Provinces (the list follows the order of Provinces as in the catalogue):

<b>Province</b>	<b>Candidates</b> Before internal seminary	<b>Internal Seminary</b>	<b>Major Seminary</b>
Middle East	4	-	2
St. Cyril and Methodius	1	-	9
Paris	-	-	2
Toulouse	2	1	1
Barcelona	4	-	1
Zaragoza	3	1	3
Madrid	3	1	1
Salamanca	4	1	1
Hungary	2	1	2
Naples	6	3	1
Rome	-	-	2
Turin	3	-	-
Poland	-	5	27
Slovakia	1	1	7
Slovenia	4	-	1

## II.- THE FORMATION ITINERARY IN OUR PROVINCES

Following the Provincial Project for formation, each of our Provinces has its plan of formation with its own features. Their main elements can be seen in the following chart.

### A.- TIME BEFORE THE INTERNAL SEMINARY (Pastoral for vocations / Candidates)

Province	Name given to this time	Duration	Place	Studies
Middle East	Preparatory time to the Internal seminary	1-3 years	Community	Languages Vincentian spirituality
St. Cyril and Methodius	Candidacy	> 6 months	Community	Languages Catechism Study at University
Paris	First cycle	2 years	Students Community	Philosophy Theology
Toulouse	First cycle	2 years	Students Community	Philosophy Theology
Barcelona	Time of acceptance	> 2 years	Community: Barcelona and Honduras	Baccalaureate Philosophy
Zaragoza	Time of acceptance	> 2 years	Community: Zaragoza and Honduras	Study at University Philosophy.
Madrid	Preparatory time to the Internal Seminary.	> 2 years	Community	Study at University Philosophy
Salamanca	Postulants formation Preliminary time	<i>“variable, according to judgement of formators”</i>	Options: Community Family Seminary	Study at University Philosophy
Hungary	Candidacy	3-12 months	Community	Philosophy Vincentian spirituality
Naples	“Aspirantato”	2 years (3 in Albania)	Community	Study at University Philosophy
Rome	Propedeutical	1 year	Community	Introduction to Vincentian spirituality
Turin	Vocational accompaniment	> 1 year	Community Students House	Study at University Philosophy
Poland	It does not exist. Candidates join the Internal Seminary after participating in vocational retreats.			
Slovakia	Candidacy	> 1 year	Community	Vincentian and community spirituality
Slovenia	Candidacy	1-2 years	Community Slovenia and Croatia	Philosophy Theology

**Remarks:**

Community = a community of the Province, usually one chosen specifically for that formative time .

Students House = together with the major seminarians or the students.

- In France and in Spain there is an Interprovincial team for Vocational pastoral activities, together with the Daughters of Charity.

- In Naples, before the “aspirantato”, candidates spend three months in a community of the Province.
- All Provinces promote meetings with young people, trying to develop a “vocational culture”.

### B.- INTERNAL SEMINARY

<b>Province</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Other studies</b>
Middle East	12 months	Province ( )	
St. Cyril and Methodius	2 years: first before and second after Philosophy	Province( )	
Paris	12 months	Interprovincial	
Toulouse	12 months	Interprovincial	
Barcelona	12 months	Interprovincial	
Zaragoza	12 months	Interprovincial	
Madrid	12 months	Interprovincial	
Salamanca	12 months	Interprovincial	
Hungary	12 months	Province	Intr. to theology
Naples	12 months	Interprovincial	
Rome	12 months	Interprovincial	
Turin	12 months	Interprovincial	
Poland	12 months	Province	Intr. to theology
Slovakia	12 months	Interprovincial	
Slovenia	12 months	Province	Additional studies of Philosophy Theology

**Remarks:**

The Internal Seminary is focused on Vincentian studies and on life in the C.M., according to what is stated in the Ratio for the Internal Seminary, but in some Provinces the seminarians can also take other studies, as shown in the chart. The sign ( ) means that the Internal Seminary usually takes place in the Province and occasionally in other Provinces.

### C.- MAYOR SEMINARY

Province	Duration	Place	Other studies
Middle East	5 years	Province( )	
St. Cyril and Methodius	6 years	Province ( )	1 year of pastoral work before the vows
Paris	3 years	Interprovincial	
Toulouse	3 years	Interprovincial	
Barcelona	6 years	Province	
Zaragoza	1-5 years	Province	
Madrid	3-4 years	Province	
Salamanca	3-4 years	Province	
Hungary	5-6 years	Province (Phil.) Interprovincial (Theology)	
Naples	3 years	Interprovincial	
Rome	4 years	Interprovincial	
Turin	6 years	Interprovincial	
Poland	6 years	Province	
Slovakia	5-6 ayears	Province Interprovincial	Year of pastoral experience after 2 years of Theology
Slovenia	5 years	Province Interprovincial	

#### **Remarks:**

The C.M. has two centres of studies in the CEVIM countries: Piacenza and Krakow. In these centres work both C.M. confreres (from different provinces) and other formators (dioceses, other congregations etc.).

The students of the other Provinces take their studies in centres that do not belong to the C.M.

The sign ( ) means that the Major Seminary years usually take place in the Province and occasionally in a different Province.

- The provinces of Spain have a yearly interprovincial meeting for the students and their formators, they have together their spiritual retreats during the holy week; they participate in missions
  - The Provinces of Italy extend the formation with confreres living together for 5 days.
  - The province of Slovakia participates in meetings with the nearby Provinces.
  - The Province of Poland arranges courses of formation for the missionaries with few years of ministry.
- Several Provinces stress the difficulties in following the Formation Project, due to the differences of ages, backgrounds, studies of the candidates.

### **III.- OUR REFLECTIONS ON THE RATIO FORMATIONIS FOR THE INTERNAL SEMINARY AND ON THE VINCENTIAN RATIO FOR THE MAJOR SEMINARY.**

After reflecting together in the plenary sessions and in the works by groups on the two Ratios, we have come to the following conclusions:

1.- The two Ratios give the inspiring guidelines of the different provincial plans and are still a precious help.

2.- The two Ratios, though studied thoroughly by the missionaries engaged in formation, are not known and valued by the majority of the members of the Provinces.

3.- It seems that the time has come for reviewing in depth the two Ratios:

- Because many years have passed since they were written, it would be advisable to include in them some recent developments from the sciences and from the documents of the Church.
- Because, in the last few years, the personal, cultural, social, religious and professional situations of the candidates, seminarians and students have changed and are still changing.
- Because it seems advisable to better clarify the responsibility of each of the protagonists of the formation (seminarian or student, director, spiritual director, formation team, community, Province..).
- Because, right from the general principles, convictions and lines of actions, it seems recommendable to insist on keeping sight of the person in his whole being, going beyond the possible different dimensions that are part of him.

4.- We are convinced that, in the formation process concrete experiences must be promoted, that can help the seminarian or student to acquire the Vincentian charism:

- Deepening his knowledge of the life and the spiritual experience of St. Vincent, as well as of his works and writings.
- Developing his living relationship with Christ, the evangeliser of the poor.
- Participating in the direct service of the poor, together with missionaries and other groups of the Vincentian Family.
- Training one's own responsible participation in the community life and in its apostolate.
- Being close to missionaries who are real witnesses of faith and letting oneself be questioned by their fidelity.
- Experiencing the main types of apostolate of the C.M., including the mission ad gentes.
- Enriching the academic formation with Vincentian perspectives.

5.- Apart from the Ratios and the documents on formation, some fundamental questions still remain: how to form true missionaries today? how to work in formation in a way that can enable our future missionaries to be faithful during their whole life to the spirit described in our Constitutions?

6.- A group has recommended to draft a "Practical Guide for Formation".

#### **IV.- PROPOSALS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE PROVINCES FOR PASTORAL VOCATION AND FORMATION OF OUR OWN MEMBERS**

In the meeting we have dialogued much about collaboration between the Provinces: weaknesses, strong points, challenges and possibilities. And, to be more concrete, we have asked ourselves: What steps can we take in our CEVIM Provinces for a better collaboration in pastoral vocation and formation of our own members?

1.- In **Pastoral Vocation**: some Provinces are doing this work at the level of animating teams. We can go further especially among the Provinces of the same language, in common reflection and in the sharing of resources (materials, experiences, and awareness...) It looks much more difficult to accompany possible candidates that today, more than ever, require presence, nearness and personalized attention

2.- Collaboration between the Provinces in the previous **stage before entering the Internal Seminary** requires to go further in the comprehension of the specificity of this step as a stage of vocational discernment in order to adopt common criteria about its duration, characteristics, progressive awareness and sharing in the community life and its apostolate.

3.- In the **Internal Seminary** we have already a good number of experiences of collaboration that should be strengthened.

4.- Regarding the Major Seminary, our opinions give evidence to the different approaches existing in our Provinces.

4.1. For one group, The CEVIM Provinces should be able to share a common Major Seminary. Such a Seminary could be Piacenza with an international formation team.

4.2. Given the diversity of languages, another group sees easier going ahead with two or three Major Seminaries for all the CEVIM Provinces.

4.3. For another group, the Major Seminary has to be held in each Province so students will not lose sight of the Provinces to which they belong and, at the same time they can be a reference for self questioning in the work of pastoral vocation.

4.4. Another group of Provinces prefers an equilibrium: Students must follow some years of the Major Seminary in their own Province and some others in an inter-provincial Seminary.

4.5. All agree that it is necessary to create encounters among the students of different Provinces. Particularly among the nearby Provinces.

4.6. We also agree that the inter-provincial collaboration could expand from an initial commitment of nearby Provinces to other more distant Provinces. .

4.7. As a form of inter-provincial collaboration, it was suggested the possibility that, after finishing theology, before ordination, the student could have a year of formation or pastoral experience in a different Province.

## **V.-OTHER ASPECTS OF INTEREST, REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS SUGGESTED DURING THE MEETING.**

It is not easy to gather in a document all the reflections and proposals that have been appearing during the meeting. We have here just a few:

- Importance of the pastoral vocation. We cannot resign ourselves passively to die. We have to invest our best energies to accompany. We have to be able to present our life and our vocation as a free choice for a life of faith, as a way to happiness.

- The number of young people entering the time of formation in the Congregation is decreasing. It could be an easy temptation to live without hope, but we have to continue reflecting together: are we arriving to the end of a pattern that was valid before? It is necessary now to be creative and daring.

- Some seminarians question seriously the call to become a lay brother in the Congregation. We need a much clearer itinerary of formation for them.

- We have to deepen more our identity and foster the Vincentian specificity all through the formation process.

- The importance of the community. It is not easy to admit that some communities are not adequate for a good formation. We need to care for our communities so that they be adequate spaces of formation for the new members of the Congregation.

- We are communities for the Mission and we live the Mission in community. It is necessary to overcome individualism; to be hard workers; to share the lives of the poor.

- The formation process should last the whole life. Are our communities able to live this process of ongoing formation? How can we put the whole Province in a process of formation?

- In the formation process it is very important the presence of a group. That is why we have to go ahead with inter-provincial collaboration.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of this meeting, our evaluation has been highly positive: the work of the preparatory commission, the rhythm of work, the celebrations, the translations service, the friendly acceptance of the Province of Rome, the sharing among the participants and the experience of communion in the same Congregation... We need similar encounters to enrich ourselves and to go further in collaboration.



