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# ON RENEWAL of RELIGIOUS FORMATION

**INSTRUCTION**

**February 1, 1969**



Instruction on the Renewal  
of Religious Formation

Sacred Congregation of  
Religious and for  
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# Instruction on the Renewal of Religious Formation

## INTRODUCTION

In its discussion of the question of renewal to the end that the Church might be enriched with a greater abundance of spiritual strength and be the better prepared to proclaim the message of salvation to contemporary man, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council devoted no small measure of attention also to those who pursue the divine gift of a religious vocation, and it set forth in a clearer light the nature, structure and importance of their way of life.<sup>1</sup> Concerning their place in the body of the Church the Council affirmed: "Although the religious state constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless it belongs inseparably to her life and holiness."<sup>2</sup>

Besides, "since it is the function of the hierarchy of the Church to nourish the people of God and lead them to the choicest pastures (cf. Ezek. 34: 14), it devolves on the same hierarchy to govern with wise legislation the practice of the evangelical counsels. For by that practice is uniquely fostered the perfection of love for God and neighbor. Submissively following the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the hierarchy also endorses rules formulated by eminent men and women, and authentically approves later modifications. Moreover, by its watchful and shielding authority, the hierarchy keeps close to communities established far and wide for the upbuilding of Christ's body, so that they can grow and flourish in accord with the spirit of their founders."<sup>3</sup>

It is no less true that the generous vitality, and especially the renewal of the spiritual, evangelical and apostolic life which must animate the various Institutes in the untiring pursuit of an ever greater charity is the responsibility chiefly of those who have received the mission, in the name of the Church and with

the grace of the Lord, to govern these Institutes, and at the same time of the generous collaboration of all their members. It is of the very nature of the religious life, just as it is of the very nature of the Church, to have that structure without which no society, not even a supernatural one, would be able to achieve its end, or be in a position to provide the best means to attain it. Wherefore, having learned also from centuries of experience, the Church was led gradually to the formulation of a body of canonical norms, which have contributed in no small degree to the solidity and vitality of religious life in the past. Everyone recognizes that the renewal and adaptation of different Institutes as demanded by actual circumstances, cannot be implemented without a revision of the canonical prescriptions dealing with the structure and the means of the religious life.

As "the suitable renewal of religious communities depends very largely on the training of their members,"<sup>4</sup> several Congregations both of men and of women anxious to work out the renewal desired by the Council, have endeavored by serious inquiries and have often taken advantage of the preparation of the special General Chapter prescribed by the *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" (II, n. 3),<sup>5</sup> in order to discover the best conditions for a suitable renewal of the various phases of the formation of their members to the religious life.

Thus it was that a certain number of requests were formulated and transmitted to the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, especially through the "Union of Superiors General." These requests were intended to secure a broadening of the canonical norms actually governing religious formation, in order to permit the various Institutes, conformably to the instructions of the Decree "Perfectae caritatis," n. 3 ff.,<sup>6</sup> to make a better adaptation of the entire formation cycle to the mentality of younger generations and modern living conditions, as also to the present demands of the apostolate, while remaining faithful to the nature and the special aim of each Institute.

It is evident that no new clear and definitive legislation can be formulated except on the basis of experiments carried out on a sufficiently vast scale and over a sufficiently long period of time to make it possible to arrive at an objective judgment

based on facts. This is most true since the complexity of situations, their variations according to localities and the rapidity of the changes which affect them make it impossible for those charged with the formation of the youth of today to an authentic religious life to determine a priori which solutions might be best.

This is why this Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, after careful examination of the proposals submitted regarding the different phases of religious formation, has deemed it opportune to broaden the canonical rules now in force in order to permit these necessary experiments. Nevertheless, although the juridical norms are being eased, it is important that this not be to the detriment of those basic values which the prevailing legislation undertook to safeguard. For "it must be seriously borne in mind that even the most desirable changes made on behalf of contemporary needs will fail of their purpose unless a renewal of spirit give life to them." 7

In order to be authentic, every revision of the means and the rules of the religious life presupposes at the same time a re-defining of the values which are essential to the religious life, since the safeguarding of these values is the aim of these norms. For this reason and in order to permit a clearer understanding of the significance of the new rulings set forth in this present Instruction, the Sacred Congregation has deemed it useful to preface them with certain explanatory remarks.

## I

### **SOME GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES**

1 — Not only the complexity of the situations alluded to previously, but also, especially, the growing diversity of Institutes and their activities makes it increasingly difficult to formulate any useful set of directives equally applicable to all Institutes everywhere. Hence the much broader norms set forth in this Instruction give to individual Institutes the possibility of prudently choosing the solutions best suited to their needs.



It is especially important, particularly with reference to formation and education, to remember that not even the best solutions can be absolutely identical both for Institutes of men and those of women. Similarly, the framework and the means of formation must vary according as an Institute is dedicated to contemplation or is committed to apostolic activities.

2 — Questions raised by the faculty granted in this present Instruction to those Institutes which might deem it opportune, to replace temporary vows with some other kind of commitment, emphasize the necessity of recalling here the nature and the proper value of Religious Profession. Such profession, whereby the members “either by vows or by other sacred bonds which are like vows in their purpose,”<sup>8</sup> bind themselves to living the three evangelical counsels, brings about a total consecration to God, who alone is worthy of such a sweeping gift on the part of a human person. It is more in keeping with the nature of such a gift to find its culmination and its most eloquent expression in perpetual profession, whether simple or solemn. In fact, “this consecration will be all the more perfect according as through firmer and more solid bonds there will be reflected the image of Christ united with the Church His Spouse through an unbreakable bond.”<sup>9</sup> Thus it is that religious profession is an act of religion and a special consecration whereby a person dedicates himself to God.

Not only according to the teaching of the Church but likewise by the very nature of this consecration, the vow of obedience, whereby a religious consummates the complete renunciation of himself and, along with the vows of religious chastity and poverty, offers to God as it were a perfect sacrifice, belongs to the essence of religious profession.<sup>10</sup>

Thus consecrated to Christ, the religious is at the same time bound to the service of the Church and, according to his vocation, is led to the realization of the perfection of that apostolic charity which must animate and impel him, whether in a life entirely given over to contemplation or in different apostolic activities. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that, even though in Institutes dedicated to the apostolate “the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services,”<sup>11</sup> this apostolic activity is not the primary aim of re-



ligious profession. Besides, the same apostolic works could be carried out quite well without the consecration deriving from the religious state although, for one who has taken on its obligations, this religious consecration can and must contribute to greater dedication to the apostolate.

Hence, although it is in order to renew religious life in its means and its forms of expression, it cannot be asserted that the very nature of religious profession must be changed or that there should be a lessening of the demands proper to it. The youth of today who are called by God to the religious state are not less desirous than before, rather they ardently desire to live up to this vocation in all its requirements, provided these be certain and authentic.

3 — Nevertheless, in addition to the religious vocation strictly and properly so called, the Holy Spirit does not cease to stir up in the Church, especially in these latter times, numerous Institutes, whose members, whether bound or not by sacred commitments, undertake to live in common and to practice the evangelical counsels in order to devote themselves to various apostolic or charitable activities. The Church has sanctioned the authentic nature of these different modes of life and has approved them. Still, these modes do not constitute the religious state even though, up to a certain point, they have often been likened to religious life in canonical legislation. Therefore, the norms and directives contained in this present Instruction deal directly with religious Institutes in the strict sense. Other Institutes, however, if they so wish, are free to follow them in the proper organization of their formation program and in whatever is best suited to the nature of their activities.

4 — The faculties granted to religious Institutes by this present Instruction have been suggested by a certain number of considerations based on experience which it is here in order to explain briefly.

It would appear that in our day and age genuine religious formation should proceed more by stages and be extended over a longer period of time, since it must embrace both the time of the novitiate and the years following upon the first temporary commitment. In this formation cycle the novitiate must retain its irreplaceable and privileged role as the first

initiation into religious life. This goal cannot be attained unless the future novice possesses a minimum of human and spiritual preparation which must not only be verified but, very often, also completed.

In fact, for each candidate the novitiate should come at the moment when, aware of God's call, he has reached that degree of human and spiritual maturity which will allow him to decide to respond to this call with sufficient and proper responsibility and freedom. No one should enter religious life without this choice being freely made, and without the separation from men and things which this entails being accepted. Nevertheless, this first decision does not necessarily demand that the candidate be then able to measure up immediately to all the demands of the religious and apostolic life of the Institute, but he must be judged capable of reaching this goal by stages. Most of the difficulties encountered today in the formation of novices are usually due to the fact that when they were admitted they did not have the required maturity.

Thus, preparation for entrance into the novitiate proves to be increasingly necessary as the world becomes less Christian in outlook. In most cases, in fact, a gradual spiritual and psychological adjustment appears to be indispensable in order to prepare the way for certain breaks with one's social milieu and even worldly habits. Young people today who are attracted by the religious life are not looking for an easy life; indeed, their thirst for the absolute is consuming. But their life of faith is oftentimes based on merely elementary knowledge of doctrine, in sharp contrast to the development of their knowledge of profane subjects.

Hence it follows that all Institutes, even those whose formation cycle includes no postulancy, must attach great importance to this preparation for the novitiate. In Institutes having minor seminaries, seminaries or colleges, candidates for the religious life usually go directly to the novitiate. It will be worthwhile to reconsider if this policy should be maintained, or if it is not more advisable, in order to assure better preparation for a fully responsible choice of the religious life, to prepare for the novitiate by a fitting period of probation in order to develop the human and emotional maturity of the candidate. Moreover, while it must be recognized that problems vary

according to countries, it must be affirmed that the age required for admission to the novitiate should be higher than heretofore.

5 — As regards the formation to be imparted in the novitiate in Institutes dedicated to the works of the apostolate, it is evident that greater attention should be paid to preparing the novices, in the very beginning and more directly, for the type of life or the activities which will be theirs in the future, and to teaching them how to realize in their lives in progressive stages that cohesive unity whereby contemplation and apostolic activity are closely linked together, a unity which is one of the most fundamental and primary values of these same societies. The achievement of this unity requires a proper understanding of the realities of the supernatural life and of the paths leading to a deepening of union with God in the unity of one same supernatural love for God and for men, finding expression at times in the solitude of intimate communing with the Lord and at others in the generous giving of self to apostolic activity. Young religious must be taught that this unity so eagerly sought and toward which all life tends in order to find its full development, cannot be attained on the level of activity alone, or even be psychologically experienced, for it resides in that divine love which is the bond of perfection and which surpasses all understanding.

The attainment of this unity, which cannot be achieved without long training in self-denial or without persevering efforts toward purity of intention in action, demands in those Institutes faithful compliance with the basic law of all spiritual life, which consists in arranging a proper balance of periods set aside for solitude with God and others devoted to various activities and to the human contacts which these involve.

Consequently, in order that novices, while acquiring experience in certain activities proper to their Institute, may discover the importance of this law and make it habitual, it has seemed advisable to grant to those Institutes which might regard it as opportune, the faculty of introducing into the novitiate formative activity and experimental periods in keeping with their activities and their type of life.

It must be emphasized that this formative activity, which complements novitiate teaching, is not intended to provide the

novices with the technical or professional training required for certain apostolic activities, training which will be afforded to them later on, but rather to help them, in the very midst of these activities, to better discover the exigencies of their vocation as religious and how to remain faithful to them.

In fact, confronted with the diversity of apostolic activities available to them, let religious not forget that, differently from secular institutes, whose specific activity is carried out with the means of the world or in the performance of temporal tasks, religious must, above all, according to the teaching of the Council, be in a special manner witnesses to Christ within the Church: "Religious should carefully consider that, through them, to believers and non-believers alike, the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ. Through them Christ should be shown contemplating on the mountain, announcing God's kingdom to the multitude, healing the sick and the maimed, turning sinners to wholesome fruit, blessing children, doing good to all, and always obeying the will of the Father who sent Him." <sup>12</sup>

There is a diversity of gifts. Wherefore, each one must stand firm in the vocation to which he has been called, since the mission of those called to the religious state in the Church is one thing; the mission of secular institutes is another thing; the temporal and apostolic mission of the laity not especially consecrated to God in an Institute, is quite another.

It is in line with this perspective on his vocation that whoever is called by God to the religious state must understand the meaning of the formation which is begun in the novitiate.

Therefore, the nature and the educational value of these periods, as well as the timeliness of introducing them into the novitiate, will be evaluated differently in congregations of men or of women, in Institutes dedicated to contemplation or to apostolic activities.

Indeed, the effectiveness of this formation, while it is imparted in an atmosphere of greater freedom and flexibility, will also depend largely on the firmness and the wisdom of the guidance afforded by the novice master and by all those who share in the formation of young religious after the novitiate. It is extremely important also to recall the importance of



the role played in such formation by the atmosphere of generosity provided by a fervent and united community, in the midst of which young religious will be enabled to learn by experience the value of mutual fraternal assistance as an element of readier progress and perseverance in their vocation.

6 — In order then to respond to this same need of gradual formation the question has arisen concerning the extension of the period prior to perpetual profession in which a candidate is bound by temporary vows or by some other form of commitment.

It is proper that when he pronounces his perpetual vows, the religious should have reached the degree of spiritual maturity required in order that the religious state to which he is committing himself in stable and certain fashion may really be for him a means of perfection and greater love, rather than a burden too heavy to carry. Nevertheless, in certain cases the extension of temporary probation can be an aid to this maturity, while in others it can involve drawbacks which it will not be out of place to point out. The fact of remaining for too long a time in a state of uncertainty is not always a contribution to maturity, and this situation may in some cases encourage a tendency to instability. It should be added that in the case of non-admission to perpetual profession, the return to lay life will often entail problems of readjustment, which will be all the more serious and trying according as the time spent in temporary commitment has been longer. Superiors, consequently, must be aware of their grave responsibilities in this field and should not put off until the last minute a decision which could and should have been taken earlier.

7 — No Institute should decide to use the faculty granted by this Instruction to replace temporary vows by some other form of commitment without having clearly considered and weighed the reasons for and the nature of this commitment.

For him who has heeded the call of Jesus to leave everything to follow Him there can be no question of how important it is to respond generously and wholeheartedly to this call from the very outset of his religious life; the making of temporary vows is completely in harmony with this requirement. For, while still retaining its probationary character by the fact that

it is temporary, the profession of first vows makes the young religious share in the consecration proper to the religious state.

Yet, perpetual vows can be prepared for without making temporary vows. In fact, more frequently now than in the past, a certain number of young candidates come to the end of their novitiate without having acquired the religious maturity sufficient to bind themselves immediately by religious vows, although no prudent doubt can be raised regarding their generosity or their authentic vocation to the religious state. This hesitancy in pronouncing vows is frequently accompanied by a great awareness of the exigencies and the importance of the perpetual religious profession to which they aspire and wish to prepare themselves. Thus it has seemed desirable in a certain number of Institutes that at the end of their novitiate the novices should be able to bind themselves by a temporary commitment different from vows, yet answering their twofold desire to give themselves to God and the Institute and to pledge themselves to a fuller preparation for perpetual profession.

Whatever form such a temporary commitment may take, fidelity to a genuine religious vocation demands that it should in some way be based on the requirements of the three evangelical counsels, and should thus be already entirely orientated toward the one perpetual profession, for which it must be, as it were, an apprenticeship and a preparation.

8 — He who commits himself to walk in the path of the Savior in the religious life, must bear in mind Our Lord's own words that "no one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9, 62). Just the same, the psychological and emotional difficulties encountered by some individuals in their progressive adaptation to the religious life are not always resolved upon the termination of the novitiate, and at the same time there is no doubt that their vocation can be authentic. In many cases, the permission for absence provided for by Canon Law will allow superiors to make it possible for these religious to spend some time outside a house of the Institute in order to be the better able to resolve their problems. But in some more difficult cases, this solution will be inadequate. Superiors can then per-



suade such candidates to return to lay life, using if necessary, the faculty granted in No. 38 of this Instruction.

9 — Lastly, a religious formation more based on stages and judiciously extended over the different periods of the life of a young religious should find its culmination in a serious preparation for perpetual vows. It is in fact desirable that this unique and essential act whereby a religious is consecrated to God forever should be preceded by a sufficiently long immediate preparation, spent in retreat and prayer, a preparation which could be like a second novitiate.

## II

### SPECIAL NORMS

The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, in its desire to promote necessary and useful experiments in view of the adaptation and renewal of religious formation, having examined these questions in its plenary meetings of June 25-26, 1968, by virtue of a special mandate from the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Paul VI, has seen fit, by this Instruction, to formulate and to publish the following norms:

10 — I. Religious formation comprises two essential phases: the novitiate and the probationary period which follows the novitiate and lasts for a period adapted to the nature of the Institute, during which the members are bound by vows or other commitments.

II. A preliminary period of varying duration, obligatory in certain Institutes under the name of postulancy, usually precedes admission to the novitiate.

11—I. This preliminary probation has as its purpose not merely to formulate a tentative judgment on the aptitudes and vocation of the candidate, but also to verify the extent of his knowledge of religious subjects and where need be, to complete it in the degree judged necessary and, lastly, to permit a gradual transition from the lay life to the life proper to the novitiate.

II. During this probationary period it is particularly necessary to secure assurance that the candidate for religious life be endowed with such elements of human and emotional maturity as will afford grounds for hope that he is capable of undertaking properly the obligations of the religious state and that, in the religious life and especially in the novitiate, he will be able to progress toward fuller maturity.

III. If in certain more difficult cases, the superior feels, with the free agreement of the subject, that he should have recourse to the services of a prudent and qualified psychologist known for his moral principles, it is desirable, in order that this examination may be fully effective, that it should take place after an extended period of probation, so as to enable the specialist to formulate a diagnosis based on experience.

12—I. In Institutes where a postulancy is obligatory, whether by common law or in virtue of the constitutions, the General Chapter may follow the norms of this present Instruction for a better adaptation of the period of postulancy to the requirements of a more fruitful preparation for the novitiate.

II. In other Institutes it belongs to the General Chapter to determine the nature and the length of this preliminary probation, which can vary according to candidates. Nevertheless, if it is to be genuinely effective, this period should neither be too brief nor, as a general rule, be extended beyond two years.

III. It is preferable that this probation should not take place in the novitiate house. It could even be helpful that, either in whole or in part, it be organized outside a house of the Institute.

IV. During this preliminary probation, even if it takes place outside a house of the Institute, the candidates will be placed under the direction of qualified religious and there should be sufficient collaboration between these latter and the novice master, with a view to assuring continuity of formation.

13—I. Religious life begins with the novitiate. Whatever may be the special aim of the Institute, the principal purpose of the novitiate is to initiate the novice into the essential and primary requirements of the religious life and also, in view of a greater charity, to implement the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience of which he will later make

profession, "either through vows or other sacred bonds which are like vows in their purpose." <sup>13</sup>

II. In those Institutes where "the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services," <sup>14</sup> the novices are to be gradually trained to dedicate themselves to activities in keeping with the purpose of their Institute, while developing that intimate union with Christ whence all their apostolic activity must flow. <sup>15</sup>

14 — Superiors responsible for the admission of candidates to the novitiate will take care to accept only those giving proof of the aptitudes and elements of maturity regarded as necessary for commitment to the religious life as lived in the Institute.

15 — I. In order to be valid, the novitiate must be made in the house legitimately designated for this purpose.

II. It should be made in the community or group of novices, fraternally united under the direction of the novice master. The program as well as the nature of the activities and work of the novitiate must be organized in such a way as to contribute to novice formation.

III. This formation, conformably to the teachings of Our Lord in the Gospel and the demands of the particular aim and spirituality of the Institute, consists mainly in initiating the novices gradually into detachment from everything not connected with the kingdom of God, the practice of obedience, poverty, prayer, habitual union with God in availability to the Holy Spirit, in order to help one another spiritually in frank and open charity.

IV. The novitiate will also include study and meditation on holy Scripture, the doctrinal and spiritual formation indispensable for the development of a supernatural life of union with God and an understanding of the religious state and, lastly, an initiation to liturgical life and the spirituality proper to the Institute.

16 — I. The erection of a novitiate does not require the authorization of the Holy See. It belongs to the superior general, with the consent of his council and conformably to the norms laid down in the constitutions, to erect or to authorize the erection of a novitiate, to determine the special details of

the program and to decide on its location in a given house of the Institute.

II. If necessary, in order to make more effective provision for the formation of the novices, the superior general may authorize the transfer of the novitiate community during certain periods to another residence designated by himself.

17 — In case of necessity, the superior general, with the consent of his council and after consultation with the interested provincial, may authorize the erection of several novitiates within the same province.

18 — In view of the very important role of community life in the formation of the novices, and when the small number of the novices would prevent the creation of conditions favorable to genuine community life, the superior general should, if possible, organize the novitiate in another community of the Institute able to assist in the formation of this small group of novices.

19 — In special cases and by way of exception, the superior general, with the consent of his council, is empowered to allow a candidate to make his novitiate validly in some house of the Institute other than the novitiate, under the responsibility of an experienced religious acting as novice master.

20 — For a reason which he regards as just, the major superior may allow first profession to be made outside the novitiate house.

21 — In order to be valid, the novitiate as described above must last twelve months.

22 — I. Absences from the novitiate group and house which, either at intervals or continuously, exceed three months render the novitiate invalid.

II. As for absences lasting less than three months, it pertains to the major superiors, after consultation with the novice master, to decide in each individual case, taking into account the reasons for the absence, whether this absence should be made up by demanding an extension of the novitiate, and to determine the length of the eventual prolongation. The constitutions of the Institute may also provide directives on this point.

23 — I. The General Chapter, by at least a two-thirds majority, may decide, on an experimental basis, to integrate into novitiate formation one or several periods involving activities in line with the character of the Institute and away from the novitiate, in the degree in which, in the judgment of the novice master and with the consent of the major superior, such an experiment would seem to be a useful contribution to formation.

II. These formation stages may be used for one or several novices or for the novitiate community as a whole. Wherever possible, it would be preferable that the novices take part in these stages in groups of two or more.

II. During these stages away from the novitiate community, the novices remain under the responsibility of the novice master.

24 — I. The total length of the periods spent by a novice outside the novitiate will be added to the twelve months of presence required by Art. 21 for the validity of the novitiate, but in such a way that the total duration of the novitiate thus expanded does not exceed two years.

II. These formative apostolic periods may not begin until after a minimum of three months in the novitiate and will be distributed in such a way that the novice will spend at least six continuous months in the novitiate and return to the novitiate for at least one month prior to first vows or temporary commitment.

III. In cases where superiors would deem it useful for a future novice to have a period of experience before beginning the three months of presence required at the start of the novitiate, this period could be regarded as a probation period and only after its completion would the novitiate begin.

25 — I. The nature of experimental periods outside the novitiate can vary according to the aims of various Institutes and the nature of their activities. Still, they must always be planned and carried out in view of forming the novice or, in certain cases, testing his aptitude for the life of the Institute. Besides gradual preparation for apostolic activities, they can also have as their purpose to bring the novice into contact with certain concrete aspects of poverty or of labor, to con-



tribute to character formation, a better knowledge of human nature, the strengthening of the will, the development of personal responsibility and, lastly, to provide occasions for effort at union with God in the context of the active life.

II. This balancing of periods of activity and periods of retreat consecrated to prayer, meditation or study, which will characterize the formation of the novices, should stimulate them to remain faithful to it throughout the whole of their religious life. It would also be well for such periods of retreat to be regularly planned during the years of formation preceding perpetual profession.

26 — The major superior may, for a just cause, allow first profession to be anticipated, but not beyond fifteen days.

27 — In Institutes having different novitiates for different categories of religious, and unless the constitutions stipulate otherwise, the novitiate made for one category is valid likewise for the other. It belongs to the constitutions to determine eventual conditions regulating this passage from one novitiate to the other.

28 — The special nature and aim of the novitiate, as also the close bonds which should be found among the novices, really demand a certain separation of the novice group from the other members of the Institute. Nevertheless the novices may, according to the judgment of the novice master, have contacts with other communities or religious. Hence it will be the task of the general chapter, taking into consideration the spirit of the Institute and the demands of special circumstances, to decide what kind of contacts the novices may have with the other members of the Institute.

29 — I. The general chapter may permit or even impose during the regular novitiate year certain studies which may be useful for the formation of the novices. Doctrinal studies may be put at the service of a loving knowledge of God and a deepening of the life of faith.

II. Excluded from the novitiate year described in No. 21 are all formal study programs, even of theology or philosophy, as also studies directed toward the obtaining of diplomas or in view of professional training.



30 — All tasks and work entrusted to novices will be under the responsibility and direction of the novice master, who nevertheless may seek the aid of competent persons. The chief aim of these various tasks must be the formation of the novices, not the interests of the congregation.

31 — I. In the direction of the novices, particularly during the periods of formative activity, the novice master will base his direction on the teaching so clearly enunciated by the Second Vatican Council: "Therefore, in order that members may above all respond to their vocation of following Christ and may serve Christ Himself in His members, their apostolic activity should result from their intimate union with Him." <sup>16</sup> "To this end, let the members of all Institutes, seeking above all only God, unite contemplation, whereby they are united with Him in mind and heart, with apostolic love, whereby they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup>

II. With this in mind he should teach the novices:

1) to seek in all things, as well in apostolic activities or the service of men as in the times consecrated to silent prayer or study, purity of intention and the unity of charity toward God and toward men;

2) when the apostolic activities of their Institute lead them to become involved in human affairs, to learn how to use this world "as though not using it;"

3) to understand the limitations of their own activity without being discouraged and to work at the ordering of their own life, bearing in mind that no one can give himself authentically to God and his brethren without first getting possession of himself in humility;

4) to bring about in their lives, along with a will which is firm and rich in initiative, and conformably to the demands of a vocation to an Institute dedicated to the apostolate, the indispensable balance on both the human and the supernatural level between times consecrated to the apostolate and the service of men and more or less lengthy periods, in solitude or in community, devoted to prayer and meditative reading of the Word of God;

5) in fidelity to this program which is essential to every consecrated life, to ground their hearts gradually in union with God and that peace which comes from doing the divine will, whose demands they will have learned to discover in the duties of their state and in the promptings of justice and charity.

32 — I. Unity of heart and mind must reign between superiors, the novice master and the novices. This union, which is the fruit of genuine charity, is necessary for religious formation.

II. Superiors and the novice master must always show toward the novices evangelical simplicity, kindness coupled with gentleness, and respect for their personality, in order to build up a climate of confidence, docility and openness in which the novice master will be able to orientate their generosity toward a complete gift of themselves to the Lord in faith, and gradually lead them by word and example to learn in the mystery of Christ Crucified the exigencies of authentic religious obedience. Thus, let the novice master teach his novices "to bring an active and responsible obedience to the offices they shoulder and the activities they undertake." <sup>18</sup>

33 — As for the habit of the novices and other candidates to the religious life, the decision rests with the general chapter.

34 — I. The general chapter, by a two-thirds majority, may decide to replace temporary vows in the Institute with some other kind of commitment as, for example, a promise made to the Institute.

II. This commitment will be made at the end of the novitiate and for the duration of the probationary period extending to perpetual profession or to the sacred commitments which are its equivalent in certain Institutes.<sup>19</sup> This temporary commitment may also be made for a briefer period and be renewed at stated intervals, or even be followed by the making of temporary vows.

35 — I. It is altogether proper that this temporary bond should have reference to the practice of the three evangelical counsels, in order to constitute a genuine preparation for per-

petual profession. It is of the utmost importance to safeguard unity of religious formation. Although the practice of this life is realized definitively at perpetual profession, it must begin quite a long time before this profession.

II. Since, therefore, the one perpetual profession assumes its full significance, it is fitting that it should be preceded by a period of immediate preparation lasting for a certain length of time, and serving as a kind of second novitiate. The duration and details will be determined by the general chapter.

36 — Whatever may be the nature of this temporary commitment, its effect will be to bind whoever makes it to his congregation or his Institute and it will entail the obligation of observing the rule, constitutions and other regulations of the Institute. The general chapter will determine other aspects and consequences of this commitment.

37 — I. The general chapter, after careful consideration of all the circumstances, shall decide on the length of the period of temporary vows or commitments which is to extend from the end of the novitiate until the making of perpetual vows. This period shall last for no less than three years and no more than nine, counting the time continuously.

II. The prescription still stands that perpetual profession must be made before the reception of Holy Orders.

38 — I. When a member has left his Institute legitimately, either at the expiration of his temporary profession or commitment or after dispensation from these obligations, and later requests readmission, the superior general, with the consent of his council, may grant this re-admission without the obligation of prescribing the repetition of the novitiate.

II. The superior general must, nonetheless, impose on him a certain period of probation, upon the completion of which the candidate may be admitted to temporary vows or commitment for a period of no less than one year, or no less than the period of temporary probation which he would have had to complete before perpetual profession at the time he left the Institute. The superior may also demand a longer period of trial.

### III

## APPLICATION OF THE SPECIAL NORMS

In the implementation of these present decisions the following directives shall be observed:

I. The prescriptions of common law remain in force except in so far as this present Instruction may derogate therefrom.

II. The faculties granted by this Instruction may not in any way be delegated.

III. The term "superior general" also includes the abbot president of a monastic congregation.

IV. In case the superior general is incapacitated or legitimately impeded from acting, these same faculties are granted to the one who is legitimately designated by the constitutions to replace him.

V. In the case of nuns dedicated exclusively to contemplative life, special regulations shall be inserted into the constitutions and submitted for approval. Nevertheless, the norms indicated in Nos. 22, 26 and 27 may be applied to them.

VI. 1. If the special general chapter prescribed by the *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" has already been held, it will belong to the superior general and his council, acting as a body, after due consideration of all the circumstances, to decide if it is advisable to convoke a general chapter to decide the questions reserved to it, or to await the next ordinary general chapter.

2. Should the superior general with his council, as above, deem it too difficult or even impossible to convoke a new general chapter and if, at the same time, the implementation of the faculties reserved to the decision of the chapter is regarded as urgent for the welfare of the Institute, the superior general and his council, as before, is hereby authorized to implement some or all of these faculties until the next general chapter, provided that he previously consult the other major superiors with their councils and obtain the consent of at least two-thirds of their number. The major superiors in turn should make it a point to consult first their perpetually professed re-

ligious. In Institutes having no provinces, the superior general must consult the perpetually professed and obtain the consent of two-thirds.

VII. These directives, issued on an experimental basis, take effect as of the date of the promulgation of the present Instruction.

Rome, Jan. 6, on the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord, in the year 1969.

I. CARD. ANTONIUTTI  
Prefect

✠ ANTONIO MAURO  
Tit. Archbishop of Tagaste  
Secretary

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Cfr. Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen gentium*, n. 43 ff. (Ed. Abbott, p. 73 ff.) and Decree *Perfectae caritatis* (Ed. Abbott, p. 466 ff.).
- <sup>2</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 44; ed. Abbott, p. 75.
- <sup>3</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 45; ed. Abbott, p. 75.
- <sup>4</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 18; ed. Abbott, p. 478.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ecclesiae sanctae*, II, part 1, n. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 3; ed. Abbott, p. 469.
- <sup>7</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 2, e); ed. Abbott, p. 469.
- <sup>8</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 44; ed. Abbott, p. 74.
- <sup>9</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 44; ed. Abbott, p. 74.
- <sup>10</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 14; e. Abbott, p. 477.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 8; ed. Abbott, p. 477.
- <sup>12</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 46; ed. Abbott, p. 77.
- <sup>13</sup> *Lumen gentium*, n. 44; ed. Abbott, p. 75.
- <sup>14</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 8; ed. Abbott, p. 472.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*; ed. Abbott, p. 472.
- <sup>16</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 8; ed. Abbott, p. 472.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 5; ed. Abbott, p. 470.
- <sup>18</sup> *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 14; ed. Abbott, p. 477.
- <sup>19</sup> Cfr. above, n. 3.





