History of the Formation Guide of the Institute

Since the general chapter of 1982, during the mandate of the Brother Jean Charles Daigneault, work began to elaborate a Formation Guide for the entire Institute. To that end, a commission of Brothers was formed presided by Brother Marcel Rivière, then general assistant. On several occasions, this commission met in Rome in the eighties and prepared a draft of the Guide.

During the administration of Brother Jesús Marín the work continued. A session for all the formators in the Institute was held in Rome during which suggestions were made to improve the existing project of the Guide at that time. Finally, on the 30th of September 1991, the Formation Guide which is still in force was published.

During the Chapter of 2006, came up the idea of updating the Formation Guide. To this end, the Chapter took the following decision: Quote:

“The general council sets in motion a new edition of the Formation Guide of the Institute which will:

a) Develop new ways to “lead the person to an increasingly more intimate experience of God” and to “integrate prayer and action (R 177) at the various stages of life;

b) Energize the practice of spiritual accompaniment as the most genuinely fraternal way to expand the roles of the imagination and the affections in prayer;

c) Utilize the Rule of Life and the writings of André Coindre and Brother Polycarp on prayer in the hope of presenting our particular charism of prayer in new language. (Chapter of 2006, A Pilgrimage of Hope, Means, p. 21)

To the above guidelines, the Chapter added the following:

The starting point for the revised Formation Guide will be formation in view of incarnating our charism.

• Initial formation would be treated as a fundamental orientation toward ongoing formation.

• “Making use of the positive experiences in the Institute, the revision would include principles of formation of partners, who would participate in the elaboration of this sections.” (Chapter of 2006, A Pilgrimage of Hope, means, p. 26)

On February 2, 2007, in compliance with the mandate received from the Chapter, the general council formed a commission to prepare the new edition.

From February 12 of the same year, the Council began to consult each of the provincial superiors with the intention name Brothers for this commission. At the same time it outlined the Commission's mandate which included:
- The mandate of the Chapter itself.
- Include other changes to those identified by the General Chapter, such as filling gaps in the current edition and place more emphasis on the psychological stability and on the growth of the person.
- Prepare a report to be presented at the General Conference of October 2009.

On September 17, 2007, the general council named the members of the commission made up of Brothers: Ángel David Agudelo (COL), Luc Boudreault (PHIL), Claude Dubreuil (CAN), Domingos Maria Goulart (BRA), Raymond Hetu (NE) y Jean Toora (AFO).

The commission held its first meeting here at the General House from the 10th to the 14th of December, 2007. The second meeting was held in Canada in September 2008.

Brother Luc Boudreau, President of the Commission presented the draft of its work during the General Conference of October 2009.

Having studied the draft, the General Council, in its sessions of November 17 and 18 of 2009, established the chapters of the new edition of the Guide and gave the Commission a few additional orientations so that it might continue its work on the new text. The additional orientations could be summed up as follows:

The new edition:
- It will include precise and concise orientations; it will not be an extensive treatise.
- It will serve the whole Institute; therefore it must not be too specific or regional.
- It will be elaborated as an adaptation of the present guide and not as a new Guide.
- It could be accompanied with a CD with complementary texts.
- In its first chapter, it will include the general principles of formation in accordance with the situation of the Institute.
- It will stress upon the importance of accompaniment in each of the stages of life.
- It will include a chapter on the formation of lay partners.
- It will not deal with specific formation for each of the different services, but will do so for the formation of the lay partners.
- Aside from giving orientations I just mentioned, the General Council asked the commission to present its project of the new edition of the Guide no later than September 2011.

The commission held two other meetings: in the United States in 2010 and Brazil, in 2011.
On 23 September 2011 the Council decided to leave the next administration the task of making the final touches to the new edition of the Guide in accordance with the guidelines of the Chapter of 2012, to approve it and publish it for the entire institute.

The November 22, the General Council suggested that the Guide be available in hard copy and electronic copy, with the possibility of hyperlinks, texts on the religious life and on formation. Also suggested that the legal (juridical) aspects of formation be presented using different characters. On 29 November, the Council reiterated that it was prudent to wait for the general chapter before final adoption of the new edition of the Guide. In doing so, the orientations of the chapter on vocation ministry for a prophetic mission and on the joint formation of the Brothers and lay partners for this mission could be included.

**Innovations in the new edition of the Formation Guide**

The new edition of the Formation Guide we are thinking of publishing is similar to the previous one. However, it contains significant changes both in the content and form.

**Content**

The new edition that is projected has three new chapters: Accompaniment (II), transitions in life (III) and common formation of Brothers and lay people (X). Furthermore, in different places, many unnecessary paragraphs have been omitted while others were introduced to present new ideas.

**Form**

We signal a few changes in the new edition:

1. Chapter I has been reorganized, Formation of the Brother today, centering it in the formation according to our charism in each of its dimensions, that is to say: spirituality-consecration, fraternal life and mission.
2. Many changes have been introduced in the text to foster a better understanding.
3. Extra care was given to wording of the text.
4. The text mentioning the different stages of formation is addressed to the person in formation. In this way, the formation is centered on the person being formed so that he be pro-active in his own formation.

Due to the changes we have signaled, the French, English and Spanish versions of the new projected edition of the Guide differs considerably from the current guide.

**Some important aspects of formation:**

- Formation for human equilibrium
- Formation in the spirituality according to our charism
- Formation for fraternal life and for the mission
- Personal and group accompaniment
- Formation for openness, for maximum transparency and recognition of one’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Formation in the discipline (asceticism) that requires our religious life
- Formation for the development of personal initiative
- The availability of the brothers to perform this ministry
- Preparation of the brothers for this ministry
- Entrust each stage of formation to a team of brothers at the head of which there be a person in charge
- Pedagogy of the heart, of trust, of presence, of respect, of listening, of understanding, of comprehension and a pedagogy that is demanding on the part of the candidates
- That the members of the animation team for each stage of formation take turns to be with the people in formation (pedagogy of presence)
- That the formators be full time in formation
- That the formation house not be limited to being a residence for students

**Conclusion: Recommendations for the new edition of the Formation Guide**

Once the new edition is published, we strongly invite each entity to develop initiatives so that the Brothers and partners read it, share on it so as to better appropriate its principles and encourage themselves to advance in their own formation. We also invite the provincial administrations to promote the reworking of the specific programs of vocation ministry, initial formation and ongoing formation of their provinces taking into account the orientations of the new document.