



## GUIDELINES FOR THE FORMATION OF THE SSCC LAITY

### INTRODUCTION

#### WHAT THE DOCUMENT IS ABOUT

*Formation, as understood in this document, has to do with « initial formation » which prepares candidates for their first commitment to the Secular Branch.*

*We are not putting forward a sophisticated formation plan. That is the task of the formation teams in each sector of the Secular Branch. However, to have greater “communion in Mission” within the Secular Branch, and to ensure that the SS.CC Charism will be lived fully, guidelines for formation are necessary. Each Sector needs to check if these orientations have been taken into account in the formation plans already developed or those hoped to be developed.*

*The document is probably not yet complete. It has to be studied in conjunction with the other documents which will be presented during this Seminar. It will be completed and modified as exchanges take place during seminars when it will be presented.*

#### THE MAIN LINES OF THE FORMATION OF THE LAITY (according to the documents of the Church)

An important expression of lay participation in the richness of consecrated Life is seen in the fact that many lay people are members of various Institutes... Their formation needs to be **taken seriously**, so that as well as ability, they will always have deep spiritual motives and a keen sense of community and church in their projects...

(Vita Consecrata, n°56)

***The fundamental objective of the formation of the laity is an ever clearer discovery of one’s vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfil one’s mission.***

God calls me and sends me out as a laborer in his vineyard. He calls me and sends me forth to work for the coming of his Kingdom in History. This personal vocation and mission defines the dignity and the responsibility of each member of the laity and makes up the focal point of the whole work of formation...

To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord in our lives always involves the following: Listening to the Word of God, prayer, recourse to a spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God, as well as the diverse social and historic situations in which one lives...(Christifideles laici, n°58)

In discovering and living out their own vocation and mission, the laity must be formed according to the union which exists from the fact that they are members of the Church and citizens of human society....(Chr.L., n°59)

In this summing up of life.... **Spiritual formation** ought to hold a privileged place in each one's life. Everyone is called to grow continually in intimate union with Jesus Christ, in conformity to the Father's will, in devotion to others in charity and justice.

(cf. Vatican II, Decrees on the Apostolate of the Laity, n° 4)

The situation today points to an ever-increasing urgency for a **doctrinal formation** of the laity, not only in an active deepening of Faith, but also the need to "give a reason for their hoping in view of the world and its grave and complex problems...

It is essential, above all for those who are engaged in various ways at a social or political level, that the laity have an accurate knowledge of the social doctrine of the Church...

In the context of this integral and common formation, the concern to **cultivate human values** must have its place. It is important for missionary and apostolic action.

(Christifideles laici, n°60)

Formation is a fundamental element for integration and belonging for the Secular Branch of the SS.CC. Congregation. Its aim is to allow the lay candidate to learn how to live his/her Baptismal consecration as "a consecration to the SS.CC. of Jesus and Mary which is the foundation of our Institute"

The present document is proposing to present the essential guidelines for this road which the lay people who wish to belong to the SB are taking. To promote communion, each Sector of the Secular Branch will make the necessary adaptations to organize the process of formation prior to commitment.

## 2 - CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS FORMATION

### ***(To adhere to the confession of ss.cc. faith)***

21 - The formation offered to the candidate for commitment to the SB is a way of life which results from and draws its own dynamism from belief in the unconditional love of God the Father revealed in the pierced Heart of his well beloved Son, the Lord Jesus from whom nothing can be separated. Mary, the Mother of Jesus goes before us and walks with us on the journey. As a consequence, the content of Christian Faith will benefit if it is presented to the candidate with reference to the spirituality of the Heart of Christ.

### ***(to develop a contemplative stance)***

22 - This road leads the candidate to the desert with Moses beside the « burning bush » (Ex. 3:1-15), so that he/she will find the tender and merciful face of God there fully revealed in Jesus Christ, near to those who suffer and are waiting to be free.

Fundamentally, everything that is put forward in this process of formation aims to develop better "the contemplative stance" of the candidate so that (s)he will learn to realize the marvels of God's love, especially as adored and celebrated in the Eucharist, and to be attentive and present to the "joy and hope, the grief and anguish of people today". (Vatican II – Gaudium et spes, No. 1) to whom (s)he is sent in the breath of the Spirit.

### ***(to be committed to a road towards life and conversion)***

23 – Formation is to accompany, support and strengthen the response each baptized person tries to give to this Love of the Father. Jesus "in whom we find all" (Good Father) is the way of the response: "no one comes to the Father except through him." (Jn.)

It cannot be narrowed down to an intellectual understanding of the Scriptures or the Christian Mystery. It is a continual call "to get up and walk" with their brothers and sisters on a road to

conversion. It is about placing oneself in the school of Christ who was humble and gentle of Heart” in order to make our own his attitudes, choices and works. (cfr. Const. No. 3)

***(to be accompanied)***

24 - Formation is a help, an accompaniment offered to each candidate to respond to their personal vocation. Because of this, it is not a journey one makes alone, but has a strong community dimension. We are called, within the “SSCC Evangelic Family” to help each other to live and proclaim the Gospel in the same way today as Pierre Coudrin and Henriette Aymer.

In this period of formation, this mutual help happens during teaching, sharing and reflecting on life, community activities, and an initiation into personal spiritual direction. It requires the collaboration and support and even the cooperation of different people and different means.

***(life that is outward looking towards SS.CC. Mission)***

25 - Formation is to lead the candidate to participating as fully as possible in the mission of the Congregation which is “to contemplate, live and proclaim the Love of God made flesh in Jesus” with “Zeal” (Const. No. 3). It needs to enable the person to be open and to respond with all the members of the SS.CC. Family to a specific call, “to enter with Jesus and with Mary into the plan of the Father’s Love which is to save the world through Love.” (Const. Bros. No. 13), but as a lay person.

***(to encourage openness to the action of the Spirit)***

26 - Those who are responsible for organizing and animating this formation and those who enter into the process, need to continually remember that the Holy Spirit is the principal protagonist. It is, therefore, essential for each candidate to live the different stages in a personal way, and for the animators of formation meetings to fulfill this task in an atmosphere of prayer and openness to the Spirit who is working for us “to create a new heart” resembling the pierced Heart of Christ.

**3 - BASIC TOPICS FOR THE FORMATION OF CANDIDATES**

**Some preliminary remarks**

31 - In order to put what has been talked about into practice, the animators must go beyond the information stage. It is not about acquiring new knowledge, but of allowing people to be challenged by the Word of Love and to go forward with the others on the road to conversion. The time of formation is lived out in an atmosphere of prayer and sharing. Time for reflection and personal prayer are essential elements.

The first part of formation (before the 1<sup>st</sup> commitment) should allow the candidate to develop their personal plan with the help of a guide.

32 - Times of spiritual retreats to mark the end of one stage, especially those leading up to the first commitment or renewal, need to be included in the organized outline of the formation programme.

33 - There is a two year formation period before the first commitment.

We try to form the groups of candidates in such a way that they complement each other.

**List of topics**

34 – The list of topics which must be developed and adapted for the formation plan of the Secular Branch are meant to be in accordance with the aim and characteristics of the formation of the candidates (No. 1 and 2 below)

Chapter 1 of the Secular Branch Statutes (Nos. 1-5) entitled “Nature and purpose” follows the example of the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of the Constitutions which is to a certain degree, the family charter of the SS.CC. family. It defines the ways that we give ourselves to live the consecration to the SS.CC. today. It signals our “SS.CC way of understanding the Gospel” and stresses how we live our baptismal consecration.

The formation suggested to the SB is a time of discovering and learning about each one of these aspects of our common “Vocation and Mission”.

In this way, the whole process of formation must take into account the different topics which are developed, that is to say:

**341** – An evangelical Family within the Church (Const. No. 1, 8, 9)

What is a Congregation?

What is the place and role of Lay people in the Church

Laitiy connected to a Religious Congregation

The SS.CC. Congregation : its Founders, its history, being made up of 3 branches etc...

**342** – Consecration to the SS.CC. (Const. No. 2)

Baptismal Consecration

A confession of Faith : devotion to the SS.CC.

A call, a response : a vocation

Participation in a Mission...with zeal!

The length of commitment

**343** – The servant Christ at the heart of our life (Const. No. 3)

To know Jesus

To become a servant with Jesus and Mary

Our personal conversion

The Word of God in our life

**344** –

Reparation (Const. No. 4)

History and theology of Reparation

How we see the world and our joint responsibilities

Starting point of our commitment

**345** – The Eucharist (Const. No. 5)

The Eucharist in our life as baptized

Adoration

Prayer and its teaching

**346** – Evangelization (Const. No. 6)

The Mission of Christ

The mission of evangelization in the Church

The mission of evangelization in the Congregation : its history, its style, its relevance...

**347** – Fraternal communion (Const. No. 7)

Relationships, arena of our conversation and our mission

Its SS.CC. spirit and style : simplicity, proximity, etc...

In the family, the couple, the work, the SB...

Relationship with the other Branches of the Congregation  
The SB structures at the service of communion and mission  
The service of authority : those responsible  
The international dimension

**NB : This list does not claim to be exhaustive**

## **35 – RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING THESE TOPICS**

### **351 – Some bibliographical elements**

The book « The Congregation of the SS.CC. – A CHARISM WITHIN THE CHURCH” as a whole, is an excellent instrument for those who will speak on these different topics of formation. This was the aim of the team of Brothers and Sisters who conceived it and co-ordinated its writing.

It includes an excellent and abundant bibliography to which we ask you to look at. However, more recent works exist, perhaps, more accessible and corresponding to the larger themes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Chapter of the Constitutions

3511 – Fundamental documents (Picpus Centre) : Collection of texts of the time of the foundation which is important to know so as to be able to grasp the roots of our Charism.

3512 – In particular the Cahiers of Spirituality:

No. 7 – The ministry of reconciliation (Reparation)

No. 10 – Some traits of the spiritual physiognomy of the Good Father and the primitive community.

No. 10 bis – Some traits of the spiritual physiognomy of the Good Mother

No. 12, 13, 14, 15 – series “Fr. Coudrin 1768 – 1837” : Different aspects of the spirituality of the Founders.

No. 16 to 21 – series “A New Heart” : each issue comments on an article of Chapter 1 of the Constitutions “Vocation and Mission”

3513 – Fr. Bradley’s circular letter (1992) – Our SS.CC vocation and mission in the light of the new Constitutions.”

3514 – Documents from the Church’s “Magisterium” (Rome)

Council Texts : Lumen gentium (on the Church), Perfectae Caritatis (on religious life), Gaudium et spes (The Church and the world), Decrees on the apostolate of the Laity and the missionary activity of the Church.

Encyclicals or apostolic exhortations : Dives in Misericordia (1980), Familiaris consortio (1981), Christifideles laici, (1988), Vita Consecrata (1996)

**352 – For retreats : booklet “ A week to live and discover our SS.CC. charism”.** (A document being prepared by the general governments with the help of the Picpus Centre and ongoing formation interprovincial commissions)

**353 – Session of formation on the History, spirituality and the SS.CC. Charism,** organized by the Picpus Centre in July/August 2005 in Picpus, Poitiers, Louvain.

## **4 - THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANIMATING THIS FORMATION**

41 - The Brothers and Sisters appointed to this task by the provincial Governments and when possible, the Laity themselves.

For some particular and limited topics, competent people outside the Congregation can be called on.

42 – In each Sector, the designated Brothers, Sisters and Laity make up a team who are responsible for putting into practice the formation process. It will be consulted about the admission of candidates.

43 – The Brothers, Sisters and Laity called to this service, do so in accordance with their ability and capacity to accompany and inspire the autonomy of the groups.