

PLAN OF AUGUSTINIAN FORMATION
Ratio Institutionis Ordinis Sancti Augustini
Roma 1993

Foreword

One of the primary objectives the General Council established for itself at the beginning of its mandate was the elaboration of a *Ratio Institutionis* for the Order. Taking into consideration Church legislation and proposition 23 of the Ordinary General Chapter, it sought to unite into one project the Chapter's decision and the requirements of Canon Law. Consequently, it commended the task to an international commission composed of Fr. Pietro Bellini, coordinator, and representatives of the different assistancies: Emmanuel Borg Bonello (I), Domingo Natal (II), Tars van Bavel (III), John Hughes (IV), Gregorio Gallardo and Martin Gadea (V), and Theodore Tack (VI). The commission produced several editions of the document with extended collaboration from the whole Order. It was the subject of study at an international meeting of formation personnel at Rome in July of 1992.

With a few minor changes the Council has appropriated the fourth edition of the document and approved it *ad experimentum* until the next Ordinary General Chapter of 1995.

By its very nature the *Ratio Institutionis* is a tool which offers those elements that are judged essential to Augustinian formation. It was the intention of both the commission and the Council to exclude from it general aspects of formation as well as those which clearly belong to local situations. The general aspects, because they are already found in the directives given by the Church and in bibliographies for the formation process. The particular aspects, because a document of this kind cannot substitute for local specifics and the need for inculturation in the formation process. Its orientation is thus exclusively *Augustinian*, and it intends to describe those elements of Augustinian spirituality which would characterize us in any historical or social context.

The jurisdictions of the Order should revise their present plans of formation before the next General Chapter in the light of the principles contained in this document. The Assistant Generals have the task of overseeing the adaptation process and presenting the results to the General Council.

This document arises in the same context of self-reflection that began when the Order was asked by the Second Vatican Council to return to its sources, which then took particular shape in the new edition of the Constitutions. It answers the desire to offer a rich Augustinian formation as a heritage and a future direction for new generations. In this way the *Ratio Institutionis* will contribute to our own self-understanding and to the moulding of a clearer awareness of our identity. Its study in ongoing formation courses and chapters of renewal will help to clarify and foster our identity and mission in the Church.

In the document the inspiration of St. Augustine takes priority over the juridical and historical tradition of the Order, which is also important for our identity. We consider it legitimate and necessary to turn to Augustine. The Rule he gave his followers and the spirituality he communicated in his monastic foundations constitutes without doubt the best of his spiritual heritage, which we must recuperate and foster. Within this rich patrimony it is important to highlight those values which have particular significance for people of today. Our fidelity to our charism obliges us to read the signs of the times and to find in our own spirituality meaningful directions for the present moment. In this way, interiority, community and mission, which are the essential components of our Augustinian identity, are continually valid because they take on a modern expression whenever we return to St. Augustine.

The General Council, in presenting this document, which is the result of a broad participation by all the Order, is confident that it will fulfill the ends for which it was composed and approved.

Fraternally in St. Augustine,

Rome, 28 August 1993.

Miguel Angel Orcasitas

Prior General O.S.A.

ABBREVIATIONS OF THE DOCUMENTS

AAS Acta Apostolicae Sedis

CA Centesimus Annus

CIC Codex Iuris Canonici

CL Christifideles Laici

Const. Constitutiones O.S.A. 1990

LG Lumen Gentium

PC Perfectae Caritatis

PI Potissimum Institutioni

"Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes", Vatican Polyglot Press, 1990.

RC Renovacionis Causam

NB. Works whose authors are not cited are of St. Augustine.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Purpose of This Plan

1. In order to insure a common Augustinian foundation and identity, as well as to facilitate the work of formation personnel, the Ordinary General Chapter of 1989 determined that a "Ratio Institutionis" or a *Plan of Augustinian Formation* should be drawn up for the entire Order.

The need for such a *Plan* is also expressed in *Canon Law*¹ and has more recently been emphasized by the Holy See through its document *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (PI 4).

2. This present *Plan* intends to integrate and specify what is already contained in the *Constitutions*², spell out more clearly the essential elements of Augustinian formation, present the principles and guidelines of formation which are based on Augustinian spirituality, and apply these to the various stages of growth of the Augustinian religious. It is hoped that this *Plan* will also serve as a means of promoting a greater unity of spirit and of ideal within the entire Order. However, it is necessary to point out that all this material is presented here in a very condensed manner. Both serious study and adequate reflection will be necessary in order to reap the fullest benefit from it and apply it properly to particular, local circumstances.

3. Our Order enjoys a great spiritual wealth, not only because of its Augustinian heritage and tradition, but also because of the rich, cultural diversity of its members. This *Plan* wishes to fully respect that diversity. In fact, in a certain way, this *Plan* is also

¹ CIC 646; 650,1; and especially 659, 2-3.

² Especially *Const.* 206-221.

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 an adjunct *Plan of Formation*, to be drawn up in these various jurisdictions. This adjunct *Plan* will, quite naturally, take into account both local socio-cultural circumstances and the life of the local Church.

2. To Whom This Plan Is Directed

4. This *Plan* is intended especially for Major Superiors, formation personnel and teams, those who collaborate with them at all levels, and those in initial formation. But as the true growth of our candidates and those in various stages of formation “cannot be properly achieved except by the attentive and untiring cooperation of the entire Augustinian family”³, all the brothers are urged to be aware of the contents of this *Plan*. All should likewise be mindful of how important their own exemplary life is in affirming those in initial formation in the vocation they have freely embraced in response to God's personal call⁴.

3. General Objectives of Formation

5. The primary aim of all 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. In this way they strive to closely follow the Lord, who did not hesitate to humble himself and become poor for our sake, and who came not to be served, but to serve⁵. When we seek this goal through the faithful living of our religious profession, “we appear as a sign to the entire People of God, we give witness to a new life already begun in this world... (and) we perpetually exemplify that form of life ‘which the Son of God accepted in entering this world to do the will of his Father⁶ and which he proposed to the disciples who followed him’”⁷.

6. This primary goal of all religious life takes on even more specific characteristics for those who experience a call to live a consecrated life as Augustinians. Augustinian formation not only seeks to strengthen our baptismal commitment through public profession of the vows⁸, but seeks to do so specifically by following the example and teaching of St. Augustine and of a sound Augustinian tradition. This sound Augustinian tradition is based both on Augustine's thought, and on the direction given the Order by the Church when it gave us our initial juridic existence in the years 1244-1256. This tradition is furthered even more by the lived example of distinguished Augustinians, both past and present⁹. By forming ourselves along these lines each of us, individually and as integral members of the Order, will achieve a clear Augustinian identity.

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

- a) in his clear emphasis on the need to constantly search for God by means of a deep interior life¹⁰ and a practical love of neighbor¹¹;
- b) in his love for the truth, which requires sincere dedication to study;

³ *Const.* 235.

⁴ See *Const.* 201.

⁵ See *Ph.* 2, 4-9; *2 Cor.* 8-9; *Mt.* 20, 20.

⁶ See *Jn.* 5,30; *Heb.* 10, 7.

⁷ LG 44, *Const.* 55.

⁸ See *Const.* 53.

⁹ See *Const.* 20-21.

¹⁰ See *Const.* 32-35.

¹¹ See *Const.* 23; 39-41.

c) in the urgency he communicates to his followers to pursue wholeheartedly their “holy undertaking” of a chaste life in community, in keeping with the model of the Jerusalem community¹²;

d) and in his deep faith and special love for the Church as mother¹³.

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

8. All of this requires, therefore, that formation take place in an integral way and throughout one's lifetime. Due attention, then, must be given at all times to the various dimensions of our lives: as human beings, as Christians, as Augustinians, and as apostolic ministers.

a) As *human beings* : Proper care must be given to good bodily health, to an adequate moral, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development, to the need for continuing personal relationships with one's 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. In Augustine's thought, this total Christ is primarily the Church, but it also extends to all humans because of God's all embracing love¹⁴. A religious vocation always arises within the Church and is necessarily lived in the Church through faith, prayer and good works.

c) As *Augustinians* : Augustinian growth takes place, not just within the historical reality of a particular part of the Order, but also within the community of the whole Order, “*which is the strongest expression of our religious family*”¹⁵. 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 II.

d) As *apostolic ministers* : Because the Church called us in our origins to be an “*apostolic fraternity*”¹⁶, 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*”¹⁷. 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*”¹⁸. Furthermore, since the apostolate embraces our entire life, it goes well beyond mere activity, and includes both common and individual prayer, as well as study¹⁹. 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 justice²⁰.

9. This total formation of the individual, which has just been outlined, must not close us in on ourselves. Rather it must lead all Augustinians - more recent, as well as more experienced members - to be open to the constantly developing and often dramatic challenges of the world we live in. Fully aware of these challenges, the Order adopted a clear stance in the General Chapter of 1989 to help us prepare for the new millennium fast approaching. Our Holy Father Pope John Paul II has emphasized time and again the modern world's need to accept these challenges through a “new evangelization”, in

¹² See *Acts* 4, 32-35; *Sermo* 355,2: *PL* 39, 1569-1570; *En. in Ps.* 99,11: *PL* 37,1277; etc.

¹³ See *Const* 54.

¹⁴ See *In ep. lo.* 1,2: *PL* 35,1979; *Sermo* 341,1,1: *PL* 39,1493.

¹⁵ *Const.* 9.

¹⁶ See *Const.* 10.

¹⁷ *Const.* 41.

¹⁸ *Const.* 162.

¹⁹ See *Const.* 157.

²⁰ See General Chapters of 1980, 1983 and 1989 in *ACTA O.S.A.*

which the Church's social teaching (CA 5), as well as the principle of solidarity as a concern for the common good of all (CA 10; CL 42), must play a greater role.

4. Basic Principles of an Augustinian Approach to Formation

10. 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.

b) While respect for the individual is highlighted in the *Rule*, this respect needs to be balanced by the respect due the community²¹. 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 harmony²².

c) A strong community prayer life, centered on the daily celebration of the Eucharist insofar as possible, must be enriched by the efforts of each individual to achieve a deep interior life²³. Ample time should also be provided for study, dialogue, 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 brothers²⁴.

5. Resources for Formation

11. The resources that deal with 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; books and articles dealing with our spirituality and tradition. A select number of these writings are indicated in the Bibliography at the end of this document. Other writings of this nature, which are available in different nations, should be added in the adjunct *Plans of Formation* already spoken of²⁵.

PART II

BASIC ELEMENTS FOR AUGUSTINIAN FORMATION

12. 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 no other than Christ and his Gospel. 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 this or that evangelical value.

²¹ See *Rule* 5,2.

²² See *Rule*, ch. 1.

²³ See *Const.* 35, 95-107.

²⁴ *Rule*, *passim*.

²⁵ See *above*, 3.

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.

13. Augustinian formation first and foremost should foster in the brothers a love for and a rootedness in Holy Scripture. The Scriptures played an extremely important role in Augustine's life after his conversion, as he studied them and made progress in their understanding. 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 delight...your voice my joy*"²⁶. "*We should make a nest in our hearts for the Word of God*"²⁷. He put his whole Roman cultural and rhetorical education at the service of the Word of God. The Bible, and especially the Psalms and the Our Father, were the source of his personal prayer. Making his fellow-believers and monks 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 own lives.

14. It is encouraging for us that Augustine himself has so clearly indicated the goal of his religious communities. 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 for God. "*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*"²⁸. 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 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 himself almost always adds the words 'on the way to God'. 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.

15. 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", 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 center 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, and a sharing of apostolate.

1. SHARING LIFE IN COMMUNITY

1.1 Formation to a Life of Relationships

²⁶ *Confessions* 11,2,3: PL 32,810.

²⁷ *Sermo* 343,1: PL 39,1505.

²⁸ *Sermo* 356,1: PL 39,1574-1575.

16. Within our tradition community life is normative. It is here that Augustine placed a very special emphasis on the following of Christ. Building a good community implies nothing more than putting into practice the command of love of God and love of neighbor. Community life consists in the cultivation of interpersonal relationships. This life encompasses the whole of concrete human existence: sharing in one another's faith, hope, affections, ideals, feelings, thoughts, activities, responsibilities, shortcomings, failures, sins, etc.

17. Such sharing presupposes openness to others, a sense of belonging, acceptance, trust, support, and encouragement, as well as sensitivity and presence to these others. Although some people may be more sociable by nature 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. But 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 very special way speaking together, for speech is our strongest means of communication. Without dialogue community life simply disappears, always and everywhere, just as happens in all human relationships when dialogue fails.

18. Even within the Augustinian perspective, the candidate should be aware that there are different types of community life. For example, there will be a difference between an Augustinian community centered around an apostolate, and one centered around a study-project. Differences may also be noted because of differing cultural or national backgrounds. Even personal relationships differ from person to person. Sometimes relationships will be deeper than in other cases; 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 in order to be Augustinian.

According to Augustine, community life is meaningful in itself. It cannot be considered as a mere means to another goal, useful, for example, for this or that work. A utilitarian concept of community life is contrary to Augustine's mind.

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

Life of Love

19. *"If you begin to love, God has begun to dwell in you"*²⁹. Whereas other Christian writers emphasize biblical values such as prayer, obedience, simplicity, and poverty -and they do so rightly - Augustine emphasizes in a very personal way **love** of the sister and brother alongside me. He writes: *"My hope in the name of Christ is not sterile, because not only do I believe, my God, that on these two commandments (love of God and love of neighbor) depend the whole Law and the Prophets (Mt. 22:40), but I have also experienced, and I still experience every day, that not a single mystery or obscure word of Holy Scripture becomes clear for me, unless I meet with these two commandments: 'For the purpose of the commandments is love with a pure heart, a good conscience, and an unfeigned faith' (1 Tim.1:5), and 'Love is the fullness of the Law' (Rom. 13:10)"*³⁰.

20. This text shows clearly how Augustine reads the whole Bible in the light of love. 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

²⁹ *In ep. lo. tr.8,12: PL 35,2043.*

³⁰ *Ep. 55,21,38: PL 33,222-223.*

conviction that love of God comes first as a commandment, but that love of neighbor comes first on the level of practice: *“These commandments must always be reflected upon, these must be pondered, these must be adhered to, these must be acted upon, these must be fulfilled. The love of God is first in the order of commandment, but the love of neighbor is first in the order of action... In loving your neighbor, and in being concerned about your neighbor, you get going. Where are you going, except to the Lord God?”*³¹.

21. 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 separated³². 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-deception³³. This view, that love of neighbor is the most appropriate means of giving concrete expression to our love of God, seems to be very evident, but experience teaches that it is not all that easy to grasp. 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 first for good interpersonal relationships among themselves in daily life, for this is the first way to God;

b) The fruitfulness of our prayers, of our liturgy and the sacramental life, even of the Eucharist, 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”*³⁴.

Humility

22. A fundamental disposition for living together in love is **humility**, as Augustine stresses in the first chapter of his *Rule*. There is no love without the openness of humble patience: *“Where humility reigns, there is love”*³⁵. 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”*³⁶. 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”*³⁷. The fruitfulness of the religious state of life remains dependent on the highest Christian values, love and humility.

³¹ *In evang. lo. tr.* 17,8-9: PL 35,1531-1532.

³² *In ep. lo. tr.* 10,3: PL 35,2055-2056.

³³ *Ep. ad Galatas* 45: PL 35,2137-2138; *In ep. lo. tr.* 8,4: PL 35,2037-2038; *De Trin.* VIII,8,12: PL 42,958.

³⁴ *In ep. lo. tr.* 5,7: PL 35, 2016.

³⁵ *In ep. lo. tr.* Prologue: PL 35,1977-1978.

³⁶ *Sermo* 137,4,4: PL 38,756.

³⁷ *Ep.* 118,3,22: PL 33,442.

Friendship in God

23. **Friendship in God** is one of the characteristics of Augustine's spirituality. He not only gives it a place within religious life, but also considers it as a great help and consolation in our troubled existence. *"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"*³⁸. However, the only authentic friendship is that one which God himself 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 us³⁹.

24. Although Augustine knew the *"abba"* model of Egyptian religious life, in which an older monk was the spiritual leader of the younger ones, he did not choose it. He started living his monastic life in the house of his parents in Thagaste with a group of friends and relatives. The *"abba"* model was less suited for this situation. Augustine needed a more *"democratic"* and fraternal style of community life, as appears clearly in his *Rule*. Although the word *"friendship"* does not occur in the *Rule*, it is evident from other texts how much value Augustine attached to friendship. His ideas on friendship had a strong influence on medieval religious life, but they lost their importance during the course of history. Monastic legislators became more suspicious of the divisive effects of friendship, and this hardly encouraged the sort of intense personal relationship which Augustine celebrated. During recent centuries friendship in religious life was even considered as opposed to the love of God, because it was thought to reflect homosexual tendencies. This is not what Augustine had in mind, and we need to defend this heritage of genuine friendship received from him. He wished also that in friendship another danger should be avoided, namely that one makes oneself unfree and completely dependent on another person, even to the destruction of one's own personality. Friendship, as understood here, is a concrete expression of that 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.

25. 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 levels 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"*⁴⁰. *"Ideas"* here means all that is going on in our hearts.

26. 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"*⁴¹.

27. Realistically speaking, we may consider friendship as an ideal. But we should

³⁸ Ep. 73,3,10: PL 33,250.

³⁹ See *Confess.* 4,4,7.

⁴⁰ *De div. quaest.* 83, q.71,6: PL 40, 82-83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

not forget that friendship is only one form of love, and most of our relationships take place on a lower 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”*⁴².

Communication

28. 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”*⁴³. 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?”*⁴⁴. 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 communicating and are in communion with one another. 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”.

Harmony

29. The foregoing considerations do not mean that community life is to be considered as a form of splendid isolation, a place of refuge for the individual, fostering a carefree existence. Community life is not a romantic dream, but a school of realism. Augustine tells us that it is like a furnace: *“Many promised that they would live fully that holy life in which everything is held in common and no one calls anything his own. This is the life of those who have one mind and one heart as they journey toward God. When they were put to the fiery test, they totally fell apart”*⁴⁵.

Augustine tells us that he never met better people than those who made progress in the monastery but, on the other hand, that he never met worse than those who had lost their ideal. *“Even though good order reigns in my household, I am a human being and I live among human beings. I would not dare to say that my house is better than Noah's ark, where one of eight persons was cast out... nor better than the community of the Lord Christ, in which eleven faithful souls put up with the faithless thief Judas...”*⁴⁶.

30. 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 all 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;

⁴² *Confessiones* 4,8,13: PL 32,699, although he regretted that at this moment of his life he did not yet love his friends in God.

⁴³ *Vita Aug.* 22: PL 32,52.

⁴⁴ *Ep.*38,1: PL 33, 152-153.

⁴⁵ *En. in Ps.*99,11: PL 37,1277.

⁴⁶ *Ep.*78,8-9: PL 33,272.

they are a natural part of human interaction, at both the individual 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. In the past, formation in religious life taught people how to pray, how to live the vows, and how to be a good apostle, but not necessarily how to live in community. True formation for Augustinian religious life must first of all prepare for living in a community.

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

31. 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 making God 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, all have to practice their profession as Christians in the light of the Reign of God. This is no denial of the particular character of religious life.

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.

32. The identity of religious life and what distinguishes it from other ways of Christian life consist mainly in two aspects:

a) In order to follow Christ, religious make a certain evangelical value, that is, the original inspiration of the founder, the center of their community life. They wish to realize the charism of the founder in and for their own time and environment. Each religious family has received the mandate to model a particular form of Christian life and community within the Church. One of the reasons for which we become Augustinians is that we find Augustine's spirituality significant for today's world, and we want to live it together with others.

b) From the very beginning of religious life the members of religious groups have wished to realize their original inspiration through an evangelical commitment. 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 egotism 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 or ascetical aspect of Jesus' message: because God is the final goal of the human being, they should not cling to material goods, to their complete autonomy, or to an unrestrained sexuality. They may not consider these things as the final goal of their lives. Religious, however, make this eschatological aspect a concrete part of their lifestyle by the three vows. They withdraw from some duties connected with marriage, with a compensated job, and with living together as persons bound by blood relationships.

33. As a matter of course, Augustine's emphasis on love and community life reflect on 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. As Augustine writes with regard to virginity: *"Is there not something that a virgin*

consecrated to God should frankly consider, so that she does not dare to think herself better than another Christian woman, be she widow or married? ... Consider that there may be some people better than you because of their hidden gifts, even though in appearance you yourselves are better. When in your goodness you credit the fine qualities of others, which are by chance unknown to you, your own good qualities, which are known to you, are not diminished by this comparison, but strengthened in love⁴⁷. We have to examine honestly how we put our ideal into practice, or how we can renew it courageously. A fresh concern for the interior aspect of our vocation is our most urgent task.

The vow of poverty or sharing goods in common

34. 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 favorite approach to this vow 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 term *“community of goods”* or *“sharing goods”* is better fitted to his spirituality and more in accordance with the lifestyle in which most of us actually live. Community of goods applies not only to the sharing of material goods, but also to the sharing of spiritual goods. Such sharing, through a frugal and ascetical lifestyle, opens us to a deep inner freedom.

35. The intention behind sharing material goods is, first, to create new relationships of equality and unity among those living in the monastery. The distance between rich and poor, between powerful and powerless, must be abolished, for material goods are by their nature sources of division: *“this is mine and that is yours”*. In these material goods lies the source of individualism, egoism, jealousy, competition, covetousness, conflict, and struggle⁴⁸. This vow means more than receiving goods from the community. It includes also a creative attitude towards material goods and their management: care for the goods of the community, their just distribution, personal stewardship, and responsibility for goods entrusted to the individual.

36. The sharing of material goods is for Augustine the first condition 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. 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”*⁴⁹. An ascetical lifestyle is no denial of the goodness of creation, but it puts material goods at the service of others. As Augustine says: *“Be particularly mindful of the poor, so that what you take from yourself by living sparingly, you may lay away in heavenly treasures. Let the needy Christ receive that of which the fasting Christian deprives himself. Let the restraint of the willing soul be the sustenance of the one in need. Let the voluntary neediness of the one possessing an abundance become the necessary abundance of the one in need”*⁵⁰. According to these principles, we should regularly evaluate our own situation. Are rich and poor persons in one and the same

⁴⁷ *De s. virg.* 44,45; 52,53: PL 40,422,427.

⁴⁸ *En. in Ps.* 131,5: PL 37,1718.

⁴⁹ *Rule* 3,5; see *De op. monach.* 25,32-33: PL 40,571-573; *Sermo Denis* 17, 2-4: MA I,82-85.

⁵⁰ *Sermo* 210,10,12: PL 38,1053.

house not a contradiction to our spirituality? Moreover, does it make sense to support the pursuit of justice and peace in the world, if justice and peace are not prevalent in our houses?

37. 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 ought 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 see 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

38. 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”*⁵¹.

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 *“propositum sanctum”*, and in the laws which regulate it.

39. 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 favorite theme in the works of Augustine is that authority, among Christians, means *“service”*. To be in charge is to serve others. 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 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.

Both obedience and authority are extremely important in order to assure unity and harmony in the community, further the search for God, and maintain the common good above personal interests.

40. In contrast to a centuries-old tradition, which interpreted obedience as an act of faith, Augustine shifted the emphasis from faith to love: *“By obeying with greater readiness, you not only show compassion for yourselves, but also for your superior”*⁵². 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 act taking place between the superior and the individual member of the group. It is also a horizontal act among all the members of the community, as appears clearly from the *Rule's* chapter on fraternal admonition (ch.4), in which our mutual responsibility for one another is underlined.

⁵¹ Sermo 296,8.

⁵² *Rule* 7,4.

41. The act of obedience always 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 to them 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 too is an act of interpersonal relationship and communication. On the other hand, it would be very 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.

The vow of virginity or celibacy

42. Marriage and religious celibacy are different forms of entering into relations with other persons. The renunciation of marriage does not mean a renunciation of relationships and affectivity. There are many ways of “*being there for others*”. Through freely chosen celibacy a religious renounces marital union, but he does not renounce relationships with others. As a celibate he wishes to give love, friendship, happiness, support, help, and encouragement to others. He also expects to receive these elements from others in return. He wants to be the companion of people in distress or in need, the companion of lonely people and of people seeking desperately for the meaning of life. He wants to be present to them because of, and together with, his faith in God, his hope in God, and his love of God. In this way we find an apostolic meaning in this vow.

43. Augustine's interpretation of this vow is founded more on tradition than his interpretation of the other vows. He begins his reflections with a very meaningful distinction between physical virginity and virginity of the heart. Just as in the Old Testament the people of Israel are called “*virgin*”, 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.

44. “*Virginity is held in honor, not because it is virginity, but because it is dedicated to God*”⁵³. This means that our energy is concentrated on one single goal: serving God's Reign, 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.

⁵³ *De s. virg.* 8,8: PL 40,400.

2. SHARING THE SEARCH FOR GOD IN COMMUNITY

2.1 A Journey of Faith

45. 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 like travelers on the way to him. 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. However, in order to reach a peaceful coexistence, continual conversion will be needed, in the sense that we leave behind our faults and strive always for what is better. As Augustine says: “*I still continue, I still make progress, I am still moving ahead, I am still on my way, I still reach forward, I have not yet arrived. Therefore, if you also keep moving, still reach forward and are attentive to what lies ahead, then forget what lies behind. Do not look back to these things, lest you remain fixed on what is already behind you. Remember the wife of Lot... We are complete and incomplete at the same time. Complete in our condition of travelers, incomplete because we do not yet possess our goal... You see that we are travelers. You ask, however: 'What does it mean to travel?' Briefly, it means to make progress, but you might understand this and begin to travel more slowly. 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*”⁵⁴.

2.2 Formation to Encounter with God

46. Encountering God is an ongoing process. Each of us will experience difficulties, adversity, discouragement, and suffering during life. We have to integrate these into our existence and deal with them in a harmonious way, relying upon God's grace. In difficult moments it is good to ask for the help of a confrere, but even when nobody else can help us, we know that, as Augustine says, God is there: “*When you suffer, be not afraid that God is not with you. Have faith, and God will be there with you in your trouble*”⁵⁵.

47. We encounter God in human beings. 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*”. It was Augustine's firm conviction that God acts through human beings. He tells us this in his *Confessions*: “*At that time there was a man of good judgment, very skilled in the art of medicine and in that respect of high reputation... You alone are the healer of the disease that afflicted me, you who resist the proud, but give grace to the humble. Nevertheless, even by means of that old man you did not fail to help me or miss the opportunity of bringing healing to my soul*”⁵⁶. This same thought is repeated when Augustine speaks of Ponticianus. This fellow African told Augustine the story of the Egyptian monk Anthony, drew his attention to the monastery in Milan, and mentioned the conversion of two colleagues, imperial officials, at Trier. On other occasions Augustine notes how God worked through his dearest friend Alypius and his mother Monica. The words: “*I was much inferior to them in greatness of soul*”⁵⁷ show that Augustine accepted their help wholeheartedly. As Augustine found God in those around him, so is it fully in keeping with our Augustinian tradition to look for and find

⁵⁴ *Sermo* 169, 15,18: PL 38,926.

⁵⁵ *En. in Ps.* 90, s.2,11: PL 37,1169.

⁵⁶ 4,3,5: PL 32,695.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 6,12,21: PL 32,730.

God in one another, through friendship and community.

2.3 Formation to Prayer

48. Prayer is, of course, an indispensable way of encountering God. Though it is not possible to give here a complete summary of Augustine's teaching on prayer, the basic law of all prayer is expressed in the *Rule* (2,3): "*When you pray to God in psalms and songs, the words spoken by your lips should be alive in your hearts*". The first meaning of this text is that our words must be in harmony with our deeds, or perhaps better: it makes no sense to pray with the lips, if we do not put into practice the words pronounced in our prayers. "*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*"⁵⁸.

49. An important idea of the *Rule* is what Augustine says about the prayer of the heart. In his own characteristic way, he defines this prayer as '*desiderium*', that is, a heart full of desire, longing and yearning. As weak 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*"⁵⁹. Nevertheless, Augustine always underlines the necessity of a special time for praying with words.

50. All things considered, prayer which does not lead to action is a lie. 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*"⁶⁰.

51. 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. He liked the fixed hours and times for community prayer in a well organized monastic life⁶¹. By praying with words we keep our yearning from growing slack because of many other cares and activities. The search for God must take place both on a personal and a community level. This is also true for prayer. Because of our tradition, which finds a model in the first Jerusalem community just as Augustine did, we Augustinians stress common prayer very strongly. But it is also important to stress that good common prayer relies on persons who have learned to pray with their hearts.

2.4 Formation to Interiority

52. One of the well known themes of Augustine's spirituality is his sense of interiority, that is, the search of one's own heart, one's own interior life, one's own conscience. A famous text is that of the *Confessions*: "*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 themselves*

⁵⁸ *En. in Ps.* 148,2: PL 37,1938.

⁵⁹ *Sermo* 80,7: PL 38,498.

⁶⁰ *En. in Ps.* 149,8: PL37, 1953.

⁶¹ See *De op. monach.* 29,37: PL 40,576; *Ep.* 130,9,18: PL 33,501.

*they pass by*⁶².

53. In the *Rule* we come across the transition from “*exterior*” to “*interior*” 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!*”⁶³. 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. The one God does not narrow our heart, but enlarges and broadens it. Being turned towards God never means being turned away from human beings or from the world's problems⁶⁴. Interiority requires quiet, silence, and peace. Yet when we look around us, we see that many people do not appreciate this silence, perhaps because they do not want to be confronted with themselves.

54. While each member of the group has to cultivate the interior life, he must also be willing to share with others in the community his search for God. Although a religious community is by nature based on faith, faith sharing does not seem to be as frequent as we might expect. Faith sharing is more than coming together at the same time, in the same chapel, to say 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. But it is also necessary to be capable of sharing personally with one another the answer to such questions as, “*Who is my God?*”, and “*How do I encounter God in my life?*”.

55. To bring about some sharing as a faith community and on a more personal level, occasions should be created to get together for a faith dialogue. This can be done on the basis of the reading of a section from the Bible, or from the writings of Augustine, or from some other important author. However, we must avoid letting the ensuing dialogue degenerate into a multitude of monologues or heated discussions. Moreover, if such faith sharing in the community is not sufficient, we should not hesitate to form prayer groups with others, be they Augustinians from other communities or laity, so that we and they may duly strengthen our faith.

3. SHARING THE APOSTOLATE IN COMMUNITY

56. Augustine makes a distinction between three kinds of life: the contemplative life, the active life, and that which has some mixture of the two. He clearly prefers this latter, mixed form. 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 what he has contemplated. In action our task has to contribute to the well-being of others. It is the compulsion of love that makes us

⁶² 10,8,15: PL 32,785.

⁶³ *Confessiones* 12,16,23: PL 32,834.

⁶⁴ See *Sermo* 255,6,6: PL 38,1189.

undertake a virtuous activity⁶⁵.

57. From the foregoing text it follows that every member of an Augustinian community has an apostolic task, for the group as a whole has to be apostolic. Every Augustinian community ought to have a special influence on our society and be a sign of hope and a witness to this society. Moreover, we must realize that modern society is a society of productivity, utility, and activity. People no longer ask: Who are you?, but: What do you do? Productivity threatens to become the highest value, even higher than the human person. Non-productive persons seem to be valueless and a drain on social life. Workaholism is a modern problem, and religious too have to be on their guard against becoming the slaves of their activities.

58. The origin of religious life is to be sought in ascetic lay movements in the ancient Church. This was also the case in Augustine's first community at Thagaste: there he organized a monastic community with his lay friends and was determined not to accept Orders. But after a few years, reluctantly and more or less forcibly, he was ordained a priest. Yet even after his ordination, he did not give up his resolve to be a monk and live in a religious community. Bishop Valerius honored Augustine's wish to live in a monastery with his brothers, giving him a plot of land in the garden of the church. While Augustine lived here, there were no other clerics in the monastery.

59. When Augustine was living in the episcopal residence with brothers who were also clerics, the situation changed and some tensions arose between the monastic and the clerical way of life: *"If someone wants to have his own property and live from it and act contrary to our orders, it is not enough for me to say, 'He will not remain with me'. 'He will also no longer be a cleric'. Indeed, I had said, and I know that I said it, that if they were not willing to undertake our life of brotherhood, I would not take away their clerical office, but they would...live apart... And yet I have made clear to them what a great evil it is to fall away from their undertaking. For I prefer to have even lame men with me than to weep for dead men, for the man who is a hypocrite is dead. So just as I would not take away a clerical office from whoever had wished to remain outside the community and live from his own property, so too, God willing, I do not allow, whoever has lived in hypocrisy, whoever has been found to have property, to make a will concerning this property just because this life of brotherhood has pleased him. Rather I will delete his name from the list of the clergy. Let him invoke a thousand councils against me, let him sail against me wherever he may wish, indeed let him live where he may. God will help me, so that where I am bishop, he cannot be a cleric"*⁶⁶.

60. This text makes us think about the relationship between religious life and the apostolate in an Augustinian perspective, the more so because the Church in the thirteenth century called the Augustinians as a religious group to a pastoral ministry. According to the priorities established by Augustine himself, our vocation to religious life has to come first, and within that scope we have to live our vocation to the apostolate. Augustine never gave a well determined pastoral task to his monks. They were to assume the responsibilities of pastoral life solely if they were constrained to it by force of circumstances⁶⁷. They ought not to prefer their personal ease to the needs of the Church⁶⁸. The vagueness of the words *"the needs of the Church"* can be seen as a disadvantage as well as an advantage. As a disadvantage, because as Augustinians we can never base our identity on our apostolic work; as an advantage, because it allows us to go many different and new ways in apostolic work.

⁶⁵ *De civ. Dei* 19,1-2, 19: PL 41,621-624; 647-648.

⁶⁶ *Sermo* 356,14: PL 39,1580.

⁶⁷ *Contra Faustum* XXII, 56-58: PL 42,436-437.

⁶⁸ *Ep.* 48,2: PL 33,188.

3.1 Apostolate as Service

61. In Augustine's theology of apostolate in the Church, there are some aspects which deserve special attention. Since the word "apostolate" means nothing other than "to be sent to others with the task of proclaiming the good news which Jesus has brought", all the emphasis has to be put on service, and not on honor. The apostolic life is not a question of being held in high esteem, but of assuming a greater responsibility, and consequently of being "in greater danger". Augustine's very 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"⁶⁹. "Two things have to be taken into account about us bishops: one, that we are Christians; the other, that we have been put in charge. So it is because we have been put in charge that we are counted among the shepherds, if we are good. But because we are Christians, we too are sheep along with you"⁷⁰. 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. The gap between priest and lay people is not so wide. A striking statement in one of his sermons runs as follows: "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 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"⁷¹.

3.2 Apostolate and Community

62. 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) although the number of members in many of our houses is decreasing, the quantity of work 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 also 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, as Augustine says. But at any price? No, not at the cost of the Augustinian charism, namely community life, and in this Augustine himself can serve as a model for us. Our community living too is a form of apostolate, if it is lived as Augustine and our healthy tradition teach us. Moreover, this community life is a counter-balance to the evil of modern individualism and loneliness, and so it is a service to people outside our own group.

63. The foregoing considerations are not intended to ignore concrete situations. For example, an Augustinian may be living outside the community, having been sent by his superior to undertake a special task for a limited period of time. This does not mean that he has lost interest in community life, nor that he has severed his relationship with the group. But if he starts living outside the community because of a lack of interest and refuses any participation in community life, then very destructive consequences may result:

- a) the danger of individualism is very much present: each one does his own thing and has his own little territory, over which he rules as the absolute master;
- b) house chapters and community meetings become impossible;
- c) common prayer becomes impracticable.

⁶⁹ *Contra Cresconium* II, 11, 13: PL 43,474.

⁷⁰ *Sermo* 47, 1, 2: PL 38,296.

⁷¹ *Sermo* 17, 2, 2: PL 38,125.

A good way to measure the success of a community is to look at the balance that exists in the lives of its members. Are they people who are fully committed to their apostolates and yet who yearn for time to pray personally and in community, as well as to meet and discuss as a community?

3.3 Preparation for the Apostolate

64. Augustine's letters 21 and 22 give us a good insight into his own preparation for his apostolic task. According to him the ministry is something dangerous, *"for there is nothing - especially not at this time! - easier, more gratifying, and more agreeable in the eyes of people than the office of bishop, priest, or deacon, if it is exercised in a superficial spirit and surrounded by flattery"*⁷². Because the ministry is an office that is public and social, Augustine asks for several months' respite in order to study Holy Scripture, so that he can learn practical norms for working along the right lines with his people, with good and sinful people alike. We see here that Holy Scripture comes first. We must immediately add to his thirst for knowledge of the Bible a thirst for study in the broadest sense of the word. In letter 21 he mentions how, before his ordination, he had severely criticized the clergy of his time, considering himself as a more learned and better man⁷³. Apparently the North African clergy was not well educated and stood intellectually on a low level. In this regard Augustine can be seen as a reformer. It was not without reason that many of his monks were asked by the people to become their bishops.

65. Reading and study were for Augustine essential aspects of contemplation in both men's and women's communities. But at the same time reading, study, and contemplation are indispensable requirements for the apostolate, as well as for community life. If our relationship with God is not nourished, we cannot hope to have a fruitful relationship with people. The former means dwelling in God's presence, the latter indicates our task to communicate to others the fruits of our contemplation and study: *"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"*⁷⁴.

3.4 Variety of Apostolic Activities

66. As we have seen, Augustine was also well aware of the social aspects of apostolic activity. Since the discovery some years ago of a number of new letters written by him, we are much better informed about his option for the poor and his actions in favor of the oppressed. In his *Confessions* he had already written: *"In your house, God, it is not allowed to prefer the rich to the poor, or the noble to those of low origin. You have chosen in preference the weak of the world to confound the powerful, and you have chosen the low and the despised of this world, and that which is nothing you have chosen as if it were something, to bring to nothing that which is something"*⁷⁵. Although Augustine held contemplative life in very high esteem and expressed more than once his personal preference for it, nevertheless, he refused to interpret as a reproach Jesus' words to Martha, *"Martha, Martha, you worry and fret about so many*

⁷² Ep.21: PL 33,88; see Ep.22,2,7: PL 33,92-93.

⁷³ Ep.21,2: PL 33,88.

⁷⁴ Sermo 78,3-6: PL 38,491-492.

⁷⁵ 8,4,9: PL 32,752-753.

things... It is Mary who has chosen the better part". "How could Jesus address a reproach to Martha who rejoiced at receiving such a sublime Guest? If it were a reproach, there would be no one any more to care for the needy. Everybody would choose the better part and say: Let us spend all our time listening to the word of God... But if this were to happen, nobody would be there to care for the stranger in the city, for the person who needs bread or clothes, nobody to visit the sick, nobody to liberate the prisoners, nobody to bury the dead... Works of mercy for unfortunate people are necessary here on earth"⁷⁶. Apostolic work, however, does not consist only in giving to other people. We also receive from them, even from the 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"⁷⁷.

67. To be sure, there is a great variety of apostolic activities. They will differ from one continent to another, from one country to another. Even in one house people will assume different tasks in a variety of areas. The needs of others will determine the forms of our apostolate. In order to make the right choice we should study the topical situation of the world around us, as well as the situation of the Church in the different parts of today's world. To give only one very general example, we can call attention to the phenomenon which has been called "*quiet, noiseless, or cheap atheism*", that is, ignorance and indifference with regard to religion and religious values. But the main problem in the other parts of the world consists primarily in the gulf between rich and poor, and how to stop social injustice. The apostolate in these parts will be directed in the first place to overcoming any form of injustice. Whatever the situation may be, the Augustinian apostolate should be performed expertly, with understanding and respect for each one's work, and with the support and encouragement of the whole community.

PART III THE AGENTS OF FORMATION

1. Human, Social, and Cultural Context

68. Formation takes place in a particular socio-cultural context, which by itself exerts a considerable influence. Irrespective of what stage in formation one occupies, whether it be initial or ongoing, we are formed in and by our world, not apart from it. We must, therefore, learn to dialogue in a very diverse religious-cultural setting. This requires of us an attitude of openness and respect. It also requires us to be familiar with the constantly changing global situation of humankind, in its political, social, and economic dimensions, so that we are capable of critically analyzing prevailing values from the perspective of the Gospels, and with an eye to the "*signs of the times*".

69. Candidates and future Augustinians will also be heirs of the cultural and academic environment in which they mature during their initial formation. They should therefore be helped to progress from merely receiving what is imparted to them, 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 today (CA 22-29) and the problems of our modern civilization can in no way be mere side issues in formation. Some of these problems which must be faced are: relations between countries of the northern and southern hemispheres, the challenges of the New Evangelization (CL 34), ecological problems, the option for the poor and for youth, respect for different cultures, the dignity of women, and the new frontiers which face the Church and the Order⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ *Sermo* 104,1,2 - 2, 3: PL 38,616-617.

⁷⁷ *Sermo* 239,4,4: PL 38, 1128.

⁷⁸ See *General Chapter* 1989.

70. On the other hand, our lifestyle says something important to the culture that surrounds us. We try to witness to the Augustinian truth that the human person cannot adequately understand himself or herself except in relationship to God. 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, tries to proclaim 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 Reign 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.

71. Each candidate is the principal agent in his own formation. Called as he is in his humanity and at the service of humanity itself, his vocation must also make him more fully human. His search for God, in and through our way of life, is rooted in baptism and is, from Augustine's perspective, an expression of God's search for him as a unique individual, gifted with life and called to develop it to the full. 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, are a movement which unfolds over an entire lifetime. It is a movement which involves a journey of faith after the manner of Abraham, a formation in Christ which is more properly understood as a transformation. Whatever assistance the Order offers the candidate should be looked upon as enabling him to engage wholeheartedly in this dynamic, to the point where he needs to rely less and less on other human agents. As Augustine puts it: *"Know then, that my joy on account of your faith, hope, and love will be even more true, more firm, and more healthy in proportion as you have less need to learn, not only from me, but from any person whatsoever"*⁷⁹.

2. Christ, the Interior Master, and the Holy Spirit

72. On this journey of transformation, however, the candidate is not alone. The God who calls him is faithful and grants to each one, in the depth of his being, the gift of Christ, who is both master and guide. Christ is the first director in the formation process: *"You have but one Master, Christ. Take for absolutely certain that, even if you can learn from me something good, your true Master will always be the Master of the interior man. It is he who enables you to understand in the depth of your being the truth of what is said to you"*⁸⁰. This transformation in Christ, then, is the work of the Spirit. Its effect is a progressive growth in loving fidelity and a generous response to that Love, which is God, which moves a candidate to join our way of life in the first place.

3. The Church and Mary

73. The Church is the work of the Holy Trinity and, in the likeness of the Trinity, a universal community of love⁸¹. This Church gives existence to the religious life of its children, nourishes that life and cares for it with profound love.

Mary, mother of Jesus, is a model of this 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,

⁷⁹ Ep.266, 3-4: PL 33,1090-1091.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ PI 23; In Ev. Io. 105,3; PL 35, 1904-1905; In Ev. Jo. tr. 9,8 PL 35, 1462; De Trinitate 15,6,10 PL 42, 1064.

offered her generous *Fiat*, and persevered in discipleship to the cross and beyond it. 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 critical path of formation, it is entirely fitting that we turn to her womanly wisdom and intercession, so that through her *“integral faith, her firm hope, and her sincere love”*⁸², she may be our model in formation and throughout life.

4. The Candidate

74. The greatest care should be taken both in the selection and in the preparation of candidates before they are admitted to the novitiate⁸³. They should 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 should be evident in their willingness to learn and to grow in response to God's love. They should also give evidence of an attraction to community life and the capacity to share material and spiritual resources, which are hallmarks of the Augustinian charism.

75. Since candidates are ultimately responsible for their own formation (*PI* 29), during the time of initial formation each candidate should be growing toward a level of human maturity, which reflects a capacity for self-control and an ability to make responsible choices. In particular, the option for a life of celibate loving, poverty, and obedience should be sufficiently established and shaped. 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, rather than personal status or security. Personal faith in Jesus Christ and a lively commitment to those values enshrined in the vows 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. Candidates need challenge and encouragement in the journey of integrating their emotional needs with their proclaimed values so that the religious values are interiorised and thus more likely to sustain commitment. Far from seeing our way of life as a safe haven or a *“flight from the world”*, the candidate will hopefully understand and experience it as a graced way of engaging life in all its fullness, with its bright sides, as well as its shadows. In this way, along with the other brothers, he will seek to discover in himself and in his environment the presence of the Risen Christ, who *“did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself”* (*Phil.2,6*) so that we might enjoy the fullness of life.

5. The Formation Community

76. While *“community life plays a privileged part in formation at every stage”* (*PI* 26) in almost all congregations, for us Augustinians it is at the very heart of our identity and charism. Community life for us is not simply a means towards an end. Rather it is meaningful in itself, since it is the first place where our professed love of God is realized concretely in love of neighbor⁸⁴. 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. It is primarily through the lived experience of

⁸² *In Ev. lo. tr.* 13,12: PL 35,1499; *Sermo* 191,2,2: PL 38,1012-1013.

⁸³ *Const.* 226; *PI* 42.

⁸⁴ See above, 15-20; *Acta O.S.A.* (1971) 91-94.

community life that candidates are formed in what it means to be an Augustinian.

77. Formation communities, of their nature, require a structure and rhythm of their own. All the years of initial formation should be spent in communities which, insofar as this is humanly possible, guarantee and give witness to the values expressed in Part II of this *Plan*. All the brothers in these formation communities who have completed initial formation should be constantly aware of the formative influence of their example, support, and encouragement.

78. Because of this influence, these members of formation communities should 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 another⁸⁵. If possible, these communities should try to develop some structures for involving students in the discussion of those affairs of the community which are the concern of all the brothers, with all due regard to the provisions of our *Constitutions*.

6. Formation Personnel

79. In each province or group of provinces or other jurisdictions, where joint programs are established, the critical role of forming candidates in our way of life is entrusted to one or more brothers, who exercise this ministry on behalf of their respective provinces and the Order. Formation personnel should be carefully selected from among those who show a special love for the Augustinian Order and its ideals. Persons who are chosen to work in formation should already have a reasonably broad experience of community life and of apostolic activity. They should be suitably prepared beforehand, and their tenure in office should be such as to ensure a certain stability in the task of formation. It is their duty to 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 individual's call to Augustinian religious life. Finally, it is their responsibility to carefully examine and evaluate each individual's progress, and to make appropriate recommendations in this regard to the Provincial and his Council.

80. As it is usually impossible that formation personnel possess all the desired qualities and preparation possible, they must be able to count on others who are more specialized to help them in certain areas of formation, as, for example, in Augustinian theology, spirituality and history, in the psycho-pedagogical sciences, and in the spiritual direction of individual candidates.

81. Where this ministry has been entrusted to a formation team, the Provincial or other competent authority must make sure that these brothers are prepared to work as a team, in accordance with the Adjunct Plan of Formation drawn up by their respective Provinces. This plan should clearly indicate the substance and content of the formation process, i.e. the organisation of community life in its various dimensions (prayer life, interpersonal relations, work, duties, etc.), formation in Augustinian spirituality, individual conferences and evaluation criteria. Furthermore, they should complement one another in the service of a coherent and consistent vision of formation in the local and universal Church.

7. The Augustinian Order

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

⁸⁵ See above, 19-28.

experience that is always ancient and always new.

83. On the other hand candidates are to be formed in such a way that they can deeply love their provinces, their native culture, countries, 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 mission⁸⁶.

84. With this end in mind, the Assistants General are encouraged to organize interregional or international exchange visits, meetings and courses, for those who are in the initial stages of formation⁸⁷.

PART IV STAGES OF FORMATION

85. 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. Formation is to take place in a gradual and systematic way, while keeping a proper balance between human values and those based on the evangelical counsels. This formation should always be carried out in the context of the shared life, faith, and apostolate of the community, which constitute the very substance of the Augustinian community⁸⁸.

1. PRE-NOVITIATE

Purpose

86. The pre-novitiate period is to last a reasonable length of time⁸⁹. Ordinarily it should 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 of the brothers. The aim of the pre-novitiate is to gradually familiarize both the pre-novitiate student with Augustinian community life, and the Augustinian community with the candidate for the novitiate. 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 fittingly profit from the total novitiate experience in its various dimensions: human formation, interior life, fraternity, and commitment to God and to others⁹⁰.

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

a) Acquire an initial knowledge of Augustinian community life⁹¹ 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 God⁹², so that he may develop his awareness of being called, through his practical approach to interiority, openness, and dialogue⁹³.

Means

88. Although we are all fellow-disciples in the school of the Lord, one of the brothers 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 options⁹⁴.

89. In keeping with the Plan of Formation and through the efforts of the above-

⁸⁶ *The Augustinians Towards 2000*, 3,2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁸⁸ See *Dublin Document*, 1974, 34-38.

⁸⁹ See *Const.* 228.

⁹⁰ RC 4; CIC 579, par. 2.

⁹¹ *In Ps.99,12*: PL 39,1278-1279.

⁹² *Soliloquia* 1,1,1: PL 32,869; *Confessiones* 10,1,1: PL 32,779.

⁹³ See above,75; 21-28.

⁹⁴ *Sermo* 292,1,1: PL 38,1320; *De op. monach.* 22,25: PL 40,568.

mentioned brother, the community will offer the candidate systematic instruction, in order to introduce him to the life of prayer and to the sacramental life⁹⁵.

90. 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 able to grow in the service of others.

91. Where the minor seminary exists, the human, religious, and Augustinian formation of the young candidates is to be attended to with great care. An effort should be made to establish well-prepared and well-integrated formation teams, such as exist in the other stages of formation⁹⁶. 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.

Evaluation

92. 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 guidance, 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.

93. Every evaluation should consider, among other things, the following aspects, which are very important:

a) Evaluate the human formation of the candidate and his desire to grow in a responsible manner, as these are 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.

2. NOVITIATE

Purpose

94. The novitiate is a privileged moment of formation in Augustinian religious life. Its basic purpose is to make known and to live out the essential requirements of this life through a personal discovery of Christ, interior Master and saving Word⁹⁷. This should be accomplished in such a manner that, through true conversion, the following of Christ, in keeping with Augustine's experience and that of our tradition, becomes in fact

⁹⁵ *De doct. christiana* 1,10,10: PL 34,23; 1,34,38: PL 34,33; 3,9,13 and *passim*: PL 34,70.

⁹⁶ *Intermediate General Chapter*, Mexico 1980, Message on Formation, no.7; *Const.* 227, 233.

⁹⁷ *Sermo* 134,1,1: PL 38,742-743.

the ultimate norm of our religious life⁹⁸.

Means

95. The novitiate is a very 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. It is a time of growth in the concrete, personal experience of the faith by means of instruction in prayer, which is seen as a dialogue and friendship with God, as a meditation on the Word, and as a discovery of the love of God in one's own life⁹⁹. Growth in faith is realized also through the Church's liturgy and the sacraments, especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist¹⁰⁰, and by frequent retreat days in surroundings where friendship and faith-sharing are experienced, so that the novitiate becomes a truly genuine initiation into the Augustinian religious life.

96. In this process the Master of Novices will assist each of the novices in a fraternal manner and will dialogue with them frequently regarding the different aspects of formation (*PI* 52)

97. 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 tasks¹⁰¹. These classes or tasks should deal with the Word of God¹⁰², 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 Provinces, conversion and apostolic commitment in the Augustinian life and its influence in the world today. Where an intercongregational novitiate program exists, specific Augustinian formation is to be imparted separately.

98. 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 austerity¹⁰³, a sensitive love for community tasks, and the other means which Augustine recommends with such human understanding in the *Rule* and in his other writings.

Evaluation

99. The Master 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:

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

3. THE TIME OF SIMPLE PROFESSION

Purpose

100. The time of simple profession, which is the third stage of formation, begins with the religious profession of vows. During this time, after having made their vows, the

⁹⁸ PC 2; CIC 646; PI 45-47.

⁹⁹ See above, 19-20; *Const. Ratisbon.* c.12,113.

¹⁰⁰ *Sermo* 227, PL 38,1099-1101; *De civ. Dei* 10,6: PL 41, 283-284.

¹⁰¹ *Retract.* 1,26: PL 32,624; *De divers. quaest.* 83: PL 34,11 ss.

¹⁰² See above, 13.

¹⁰³ See above, 36.

brothers take a more intimate part in a community that shares faith, life, and work, and in all that Augustinian religious life implies. This period of growing, personal involvement ought to lead to one's unconditional commitment to God in solemn profession.

Means

101. The principal means of Augustinian formation is the living of our day-to-day common life in a fraternal, dedicated, and joyful manner¹⁰⁴. 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*¹⁰⁵. 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, and work, and which does not run away from the hard realities of life¹⁰⁶.

102. The Augustinian community should be so steeped in fraternal spirit that dialogue and mutual responsibility for forming friendships will flourish. This would be 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 encouraged¹⁰⁷. This climate of Augustinian friendship should bring about a regular exchange with the formation personnel concerning vocation, religious consecration, community life and the apostolate, 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.

- 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.

- 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 world¹⁰⁸, and other topics that are important for the religious life, as well as for the human and professional formation of the religious.

103. Study and research form part of the most vital and genuine tradition of Augustinian religious life. This is a true gift of God to our Order, which comes to us from the life and works of Augustine and of our predecessors. It is at the service of our vocation of following Jesus, and it should nourish our prayer, our community life and the works of our apostolate. The systematic study of theology¹⁰⁹ and of other human sciences should be engaged in as a fundamental means of preparing Augustinian religious, and as a true apostolate that will help one's life of faith and apostolic work, both now and in the future¹¹⁰. In particular cases suitable adjustment can be made to this policy by the proper authorities. But preparation in studies, both for Augustinian religious and priests, must bring us to an authentic knowledge of Christ and to a real living out of what we learn in theology¹¹¹. So that the theological preparation of the

¹⁰⁴ See above, 16-18; *Dublin Document*, 62-67.

¹⁰⁵ 7-15; 112-120.

¹⁰⁶ *De op. monach.*, *passim*: PL 40.

¹⁰⁷ See above, 28.

¹⁰⁸ *General Chapter 1989*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ See above, 64-65; *Pastores dabo vobis*, 51-56; *Const.* 124-156.

¹¹⁰ Possidius, *Vita August.* 3: PL 32,38; *De op. monach.* 29,37: PL 40,576.

¹¹¹ *Ep.* 137,1,3: PL 33, 516-517.

religious may not come to be viewed as a failure, it should become for them an abundant source of growth in the spiritual life and in human enrichment (*PI* 58; 60-62).

Where theology is studied outside of an Augustinian center of studies, courses on St. Augustine are to be given, which must be specified as to time and method in each province's formation program. In the same way these formation programs must specify the manner of presenting courses on Justice and Peace, in keeping with the wishes of the General Chapter of 1989¹¹².

104. The simply professed brothers should undertake a gradual pastoral experience¹¹³ with the support of formation personnel and specialists in this area, but without neglecting their studies in any way. This experience should take place both in their own cultural settings as well as in others, in easier situations as well as in those that are more difficult, and even among the marginalized. In the same way it is important to give special care to the liturgy in the religious life, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, so that this liturgical life may be lived in all its depth. To help achieve these objectives the brothers should take part in relevant courses and activities in order to complete their formation. We must be fully committed to bringing about the integration of theology and pastoral life.

105. We should never forget that the goal of the newly professed brother's religious life during initial formation is to reach the very 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.

106. To encourage the participation of all the brothers in community life, the practical ways and means of living that community life should be worked out by all in common.

Evaluation

107. So that we do not become curious about the lives of others, while neglecting our own¹¹⁴, the formation team should encourage personal and community evaluation, with a frequency to be determined by the Master or by the team itself. This evaluation should 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 should consider the different aspects of religious life, and especially community life, prayer, the apostolate, 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 a true feeling for community life.

4. AUGUSTINIAN MINISTRY

Purpose

108. All of us, as religious and in keeping with our particular gifts, are called to share in the mission of Christ and in the apostolic life of the Church¹¹⁵. A basic aspect of formation is the discernment, at each stage of formation, of the practical way in which each one is capable of carrying out pastoral ministry. Moreover, many of us are called to collaborate in the ordained ministry of the Church, especially in the diaconate and in the ministerial priesthood.

¹¹² See Program, no. 25.

¹¹³ See above, 64-65; *PI* 62.

¹¹⁴ *Confessiones* 10,3,3: PL 32,780; *Sermo* 63a (Mai 25) 1: MA 1, 317.

¹¹⁵ *LG* 41; *Const.* 157 ss.

109. Our goal is to grow in the practical integration of our religious life and our apostolic activities, so that the ministry of the apostolate may become a true source of personal sanctification, of growth in community life, and of love for our mission at the service of the Church and of the people.

Means

110. We must continually strive to give meaning to our Augustinian community life as the first form of our apostolic preaching, so that we may be active in contemplation and contemplatives in action¹¹⁶. Our community life should offer the world a real example of authentically human and sincere brotherhood, which mirrors the love of God to all peoples, without distinction¹¹⁷.

a) As Augustinians we should always cultivate a sense of community and teamwork in every pastoral effort. This is especially true today when we need to renew the Christian fabric of society, as a challenge to individualism, by practicing mutual responsibility, by the example of our own lives, and by a practical creativity, both as individuals and as community. In this way, united by the Holy Spirit that God has poured into our hearts, we can care for the Body of Christ and communicate to others an experience of life in community¹¹⁸.

b) Inspired by gratitude and not by self-seeking, we must constantly prepare ourselves to truly proclaim the Reign of God by giving expression to our personal faith and by practising an authentic love for the Church. In the context of Augustinian experience we strive to understand the problems of our times in a realistic and hope-filled manner. In this way, as we assume the joys and hopes of men and women today, we can avoid falling into a paralyzing rigidity or an all too easy attitude of “*anything goes*”.

c) We must learn to listen to others, especially to the laity and experts, encouraging their cooperation and their apostolic organizations¹¹⁹, so that we may work together, as friends and brothers, for the building up of the Reign of God. We must also make a constant effort to integrate our religious and pastoral lives¹²⁰. Moreover, in our apostolate we must always find time for our life of prayer and study.

d) All this work requires that we take proper advantage of the time of initial and ongoing formation in order to renew our community and apostolic life¹²¹, with reference to:

- spirituality and the ministries;
- pastoral practice in itself, in the community, in the missions, in the care of the marginalized, and in social service;
- cooperation in the ordinary life of a community, which enhances the spirituality of daily life through simple tasks;
- inculturation and insertion into the experience of other cultures and languages.

111. We have to adopt in depth that new evangelization (CL 34 ss.), which must proclaim the living Christ to today's world with a new enthusiasm, renewed dedication and new methods. To accomplish this we should become involved especially with the poor and the marginalized. We also need to open ourselves more to cooperation with the local church, seeing ourselves as partners in mission with the laity. We should all be aware of the positive values of the milieu in which we live, as well as of the ambiguities and difficulties with which it confronts us.

¹¹⁶ Ep. 48,1-3: PL 33, 187-189; *De civ. Dei* 19,19: PL 41,647-648.

¹¹⁷ See *Dublin Document*, 42 and 38.

¹¹⁸ CL 34; *Address of Pope John Paul II to the General Chapter 1989*.

¹¹⁹ See *Const.* 175.

¹²⁰ See above, 56, 62-63; *Dublin Document*, 92.

¹²¹ See *Const.* 110.

112. It is indispensable that we respect the diversity of peoples wherever we work. This will make it more possible for us to appreciate their religious and cultural heritage and engage in dialogue with them. Furthermore the very mobility of our world today and the international character of our Order should encourage us to study other languages, in keeping with the urging of the General Chapter of 1989 (no. 50).

113. So that all may profit to the full 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, regardless of their likely option for ordination or for lay religious life. For those brothers who are not called to the ordained ministry, practical and pastoral theology is to be offered, as a preparation for their own apostolic activity. Likewise these brothers are to be thoroughly prepared for skilled service in the Order. Their academic education is to be continued, in keeping with each one's personal ability, and in view of acquiring appropriate professional or technical qualifications.

114. Although, as is well known, the priesthood is a charism different from the religious life¹²², historically the Order has served the Church through this ministry¹²³. Indeed, for those who are called to this priesthood, it is the appropriate way for them to serve God and their brothers and sisters. Therefore, we must accept with humble simplicity the Church's call to this service, as a further expression of our love for the Church and for humanity. In the same way we should accept with true religious zeal the different ministries in the field of education, as well as the new parochial and missionary ministries, which the Church and our brothers and sisters ask of us today.

115. In order to receive the ministry of **lector**, one must have acquired a deep appreciation of the Word of God and an appropriate ability to proclaim this Word.

One who receives the ministry of **acolyte** must have a suitable sense of the Eucharistic mystery and know when he is authorized to give communion.

It is recommended that those who aspire to these ministries lead a religious life that is balanced, simple, close to God, to others, and to the everyday Christian experience.

116. The **diaconate** requires that one have achieved familiarity with the Word of God, the capability of proclaiming it, and service to the Body of Christ that is reflected through the clear example of one's life and in the social commitment which this ministry carries with it.

117. The **priest** is the minister of the Word and of the Sacrament¹²⁴. He must conduct himself as the "*servant of the servants of God*"¹²⁵, because he is the pastor of all: "*We are servants of the Church, especially of its weakest members*"¹²⁶.

This ministry must always be integrated into community life¹²⁷.

The priest must be ready to serve the Gospel and the people as a pastor in the world of today, maintaining an equilibrium among the different priestly tasks, at the service of the local and the universal Church.

Evaluation

118. The evangelical fruitfulness of our apostolate requires us to adopt a critical view, not only of the world and others, but also of ourselves. Therefore we must evaluate:

- a) our evangelical effort in the service of the Word;
- b) our service to our brothers and sisters;

¹²² See above, 56-60.

¹²³ See *Const.* 3-4.

¹²⁴ *Ep.* 21,3: PL 33,88-89; *Ep.* 228, 2: PL 33,1014.

¹²⁵ *Ep.* 217, salutatio: PL 33,978.

¹²⁶ *De op. monach.* 29,37: PL 40,577.

¹²⁷ See above, 56-60; *Const.* 172-173.

- c) our ability to listen to the opinion of others regarding our apostolic work;
- d) our ability to integrate religious life and the apostolic life;
- e) our effort at renewal, so as not to become out of date;
- f) our willingness to accept personal guidance, especially in the first years of the apostolate.

5. ONGOING FORMATION

Purpose

119. Ongoing formation finds its basic meaning in the need to continually nourish and revitalize the grace of one's vocation. As Augustine reminds us: when you said, "*That's enough*", you began your downfall¹²⁸. 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.

120. Each friar must be fully aware that renewal and formation are a lifetime challenge¹²⁹. 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 and Christians (PI 67). From this it is clear that ongoing formation must include all the important aspects of our human and religious life.

121. 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.

Means

122. a) The most important means of ongoing formation is a steady and meaningful participation in the life of one's own community and Province. This is accomplished by his 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.

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 apostolate¹³⁰.

c) Equally important for us are our annual retreat and periodic days of recollection, to be held at least in the special liturgical seasons.

d) We should also take part in ongoing formation courses on the provincial or regional level, or as sponsored by the Order. These provide us with the opportunity to renew ourselves on the human and spiritual plane, in social charity and in our particular charism.

123. a) 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.

Consequently, it is necessary to devote time to "*working on oneself*"¹³¹, and in this

¹²⁸ *Sermo* 169,15,18: PL 38,926.

¹²⁹ PI 66-71; PC 18; CL 63.

¹³⁰ *Dublin Document*, 83-84.

¹³¹ John Paul II, AAS 71 (1979) 413).

way try to forestall problems 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 direction, 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, giving up, 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 easily take care of their health, as well as maintain fraternal relationships, religious and priestly friendships, love for others, and enthusiasm. In this way they will be able to face retirement, old age, and illness with the guarantees that come from faith, love and hope.

b) Consequently, it is 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.

c) 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 mystics, exemplary individuals 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 topics.

d) 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 Province or the Community.

124. Major superiors and the local prior are to be concerned for the health of the brothers of all ages. Their concern should extend also to personal and religious fulfillment, with all due respect for their personal freedom¹³². 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.

125. It is also very fitting that the provinces make available places of retreat, rest, and rehabilitation. These places permit the brothers to truly renew themselves in moments of crisis, fatigue, or great 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.

126. In what concerns our young religious, both they and their Major Superiors must give special attention to the following considerations:

- 1) judicious incorporation into the community to which they are assigned, where they are made to feel at home and where their qualities can be appropriately utilized;
- 2) personal spiritual direction;
- 3) the organization of gatherings appropriate for religious of that age.

Evaluation

127. The local and provincial chapters and the Prior General will evaluate this entire process of ongoing formation and see that it is properly carried out.

¹³² See above, 39; *Dublin Document*, 70-75.

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