

APOSTOLIC FORMATION OF THE MEMBERS
OF THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

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INTRODUCTION

The topic is broad, deliberately so. It was left for me to give some specific parameters, if I wished. I have decided, in general, to treat of the topic from within the parameters of the General Statutes of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, as published in the booklet, *UAC Project 2000*, Rome 1999¹.

Formation, the Union of Catholic Apostolate, and Collaboration, were identified by the XVIII General Assembly of the SAC, as the main priorities of the future². The Letter of the General Coordination Council of the UAC, dated 22 October 1999, also recommends that, in the realisation of the General Statutes of the UAC, "special emphasis be given to an adequate formation process"³. I think it is important that all our current efforts give particular emphasis to our main priorities for the Jubilee Year 2000, and this is the reason for the choice of approach.

Formation has been, for many years, one of the priorities of our efforts "of guaranteeing the unity and apostolic efficiency of the total Union"⁴. A great effort was invested in the preparation of the formation Manuel *Called by Name*. The desired results were not as great as expected. Perhaps the machine was adequate, but the on/off switch was missing. Perhaps we have adequate resources, but we need a key to switch on the functioning process? At present, the General Coordination Council of the Union is working to establish "the unifying principles of formation throughout the Union", and to prepare "guidelines and objectives" of formation⁵. This presentation is not meant to interfere with this process. Hopefully it can contribute something to the efforts presently being made in this direction.

I hope to raise questions during the presentation, in order to promote some discussion and clarification of issues. I would propose that at the end of the presentation you divide into small groups of three, or so, to discuss one or other of the questions raised. The sharing of the findings could be both useful and interesting.

The presentation, besides the Introduction and Conclusion, is made up of four sections, which correspond to the four elements implicit in the title, namely: 1. Members of the UAC; 2. The Call to be *Apostles*; 3. Apostolic Formation of *Members*; 4. Key Pallottine Concepts of Education, Formation and Belonging.

1. MEMBERS OF THE UAC

In the writings of our Founder the term *members* has a rather generic meaning. The range goes

¹ Cf. The Union of Catholic Apostolate, *UAC Project 2000*, Rome 1999, p. 40 (*General Statutes = General Statutes of the Union of Catholic Apostolate*, in: *UAC Project 2000*, Rome 1999, p. 15-40).

² Cf. The Society of the Catholic Apostolate, *Final Document of the XVIII General Assembly*, Rome 1999, p. 41-44.

³ Cf. *UAC Project 2000*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴ Cf. *Preamble i*; *General Statutes*, art. 29.

⁵ *General Statutes*, art. 35.

from the very committed, juridical or otherwise, to those “who, even once only, are disposed to help in the revival of faith...”⁶. This necessitated, in time, different categories of members with different responsibilities and authority. In turn, this led to the difficulty regarding how we are to understand the distinction between the full member and the less-than-full members⁷.

In the General Statutes of the UAC, in the various drafts, many efforts were made to respect the ideas of the Founder. Care has been taken to be faithful, while at the same time expressing the same ideas of old in a language that can communicate according to today’s needs. We find four terms used in the General Statutes:

- *General Principles of Belonging*

“The Union becomes a reality when people, inspired by the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti, *consciously* commit themselves to promote, or support, the Universal Apostolate, in every place, with all suitable means, and in collaboration with all people of good will”⁸.

- *Effective Members*

“Effective members are *Catholics* who are admitted to the Union of Catholic Apostolate after a commensurate formation, in accordance with what these Statutes establish”⁹.

- *Collaborative Members*

“Collaborative members are *Christians* who in any way share the spirit, the life, or the initiatives of the Union or of a member community. The conditions under which collaborative members participate are established at the local level”¹⁰.

- *Friends*

“Friends of the UAC are those who, according to their own possibilities, participate in, or support, the life and activities of the Union, even temporarily. Their relationship with the Union is regulated at the local level”¹¹.

The term *member* is global, but at the same time differentiated for juridical and organisational reasons. This means that the term *formation* will also have different meanings and different applications.

2. THE CALL TO BE *APOSTLES*

The mission of the UAC is to awaken in all people an orientation towards the infinite love and mercy of God and towards an understanding of their own particular dignity as images of God; to make them aware of their call to holiness and to the apostolate of Jesus Christ; to re-enkindle the power of the love of Christ within and among them; to strive to bring to fruition the charism of every person. It seeks to live the mystery of the Church as the mystery of communion, which reveals the identity of the lay faithful. It promotes awareness of the mission entrusted to each person by God, and aspires to strengthen and support and readiness and capacity of people to carry out the

⁶ Cf. *OOCC* IV, p. 123 (*OOCC* = San Vincenzo Pallotti, *Opere complete*, a cura di Francesco Moccia, vol. I-XIII, Roma 1964-1997).

⁷ Cf. *OOCC* IV, p. 395ff.

⁸ *General Statutes*, art. 22.

⁹ *General Statutes*, art. 26.

¹⁰ *General Statutes*, art. 27.

¹¹ *General Statutes*, art. 28.

apostolate together¹². The UAC makes accessible to the People of God that apostolic spirituality which is our inheritance¹³.

All are called to the Apostolate. This is the clear ecclesial intuition of St. Vincent Pallotti in an age when the vast majority of Christians were passive and without the capacity of giving reason for the hope within them. Let us listen to his words:

“The Twelve mentioned in St. Luke ... are the Apostles of Jesus Christ; and everything they have done for the greater glory of God... is their Apostolate... Notwithstanding this fact, the idea of Apostolate, and the name Apostle, according to the language of Sacred Scripture, is not such that it cannot be distinguished from ecclesiastical jurisdiction and from the sacred Ministry of consecration and absolution. There is a sense in which a person, though not a priest, can have the recognition of Apostle, and therefore, his/her service can be termed Apostolate... In fact, the Holy Church, forever assisted by the Holy Spirit in the intelligence of Sacred Scripture, does not salute Mary, Mother of God, with the title of Queen of Priests, of Bishops... but rather with the title of Queen of Apostles. In a way, above and beyond the Apostles, and without ecclesiastical jurisdiction or power, Mary contributed, according to Her situation of life, to the propagation of the Faith. Therefore, every person who, according to one's life situation, one's strength, and trusting in divine grace, does what he/she can for the propagation of the Faith, may merit the name of Apostle, and everything one does in favour of that objective shall be his/her Apostolate.... All are called”¹⁴.

This is an important ecclesial reflection of our Founder. It is not new or unique. It is the revival of an old memory, long forgotten and ignored, and now our patrimony. Basically, it is an affirmation that the “Marian dimension of the Church precedes the Petrine”¹⁵. The universal apostolate is our primary objective. How do we promote this objective?

In the General Statutes of the UAC there are three basic structures: General and National Coordination Councils and the Local Coordination Councils. The former are more directed to general guidance and animation. The Local Coordination Council is the heart of our charismatic efforts today, to promote the universal apostolate. They are “motivating centres of collaboration and *encounter* to sustain a common spirituality and promote the diversity of apostolic initiatives”¹⁶. They are “*cenacles* open to the signs of the times in a continuous discernment of the apostolic priorities of the locality”¹⁷. Essentially, they are places of encounter, laboratories of the Holy Spirit, places of education, bringing forth the unique love and mission of every person. It is here that the components of the Pallottine Family, of a given situation or territory are called together, in prayer, work, service, co-ordination, empowered by mutual and complementary support, and then capable of reaching out to others in a creative loving manner.

These are places where various difficulties must be faced, not alone operative or of *ordinary administration* but also those connected with the encounter of different mentalities, with the inheritance of the historical past of fidelity and infidelity to our charism, with personal and community limitations – at the human, Christian, and charismatic level – limitations from which no one is exempted during our worldly pilgrimage!

On the other hand, this is the place where we also experience God, in the ordinary rather than

¹² Cf. *General Statutes*, art. 1, 12-13.

¹³ Cf. *General Statutes*, art. 13, 14-17.

¹⁴ Cf. *OOCC III*, p. 139-143.

¹⁵ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 773.

¹⁶ *General Statutes*, art. 44.

¹⁷ *General Statutes*, art. 45.

extraordinary bits and pieces of every day, in the fruits of the Spirit which all can contemplate, even if, as we are cautioned by the Gospel (cf. Jn 4:37), often those who sow are not those to gather (cf. 1 Cor 3:6-9).

Let's not be deceived, and then lose heart after an initial enthusiasm. The encounter and collaboration to which our charism calls us in a special way, is not easy. It is a gift from God, and will not happen without personal conversion, and the continual intervention of the Holy Spirit.

To these Local Coordination Councils belong the task of creating regular, and not too infrequent, occasions of *concrete formation*, that is, experiential, and to organise the same in accord with the projects and guidelines being prepared by the National and the General Coordination Councils.

3. APOSTOLIC FORMATION OF *MEMBERS*

In the writings of the Founder, it is interesting to note that the key word *formation* does not appear in the index of the *OOCC*. However, a computer search reveals that the word *formation* is to be found in the writings, but not often, and hardly with the kind of universal meaning we give the word today. For example, in reflecting on the students of the Propaganda College, in two short pages, our Founder uses the phrases “spiritual education”, “necessity to form the constitutive of the true Christian”, “the necessity of being a help and not an obstacle to such very important formation”, and then writes of “ecclesiastical education”¹⁸. This brief example indicates that our Founder did not give as much meaning to the word *formation* as documents and writings of today tend to do. Perhaps it is a mistake to take this word to mean everything that is attributed to it today.

The approach of this presentation aims to give the word *formation* a more limited, or precise meaning, and then to find other words to describe other aspects of an apostolic and Pallottine pedagogical approach.

An adequate pedagogy of *formation* for today must not just imitate all the indications of our origins. We must be aware of the origins. At the same time, we ignore change and development at a great peril to our meaningful future. The Church asks us, not to imitate, but to renew, reform, re-appropriate the message and strategy of our origins. We need modern paradigms to do this. Until such time as we are producing our own paradigms – and this takes a lot of time and experience, in view of all that we propose - we will need to borrow.

With reference to this challenge I wish to quote at length from the Report I presented at the XVIII General Assembly of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, 1998. “A leading expert of today, Amedeo Cencini, holds the view that the ‘educative project’ cannot be described by any one word. Rather, it has to be ‘contemplated and articulated by means of the convergence of a plurality of dimensions, or phases and levels’. He speaks of three such levels. First, there is the level of ‘educating’, a ‘bringing out’, a potential, and a process of self-expression. Secondly, there is the level of ‘formation’, which means having a precise model, a way of being – i.e. a Pallottine way of being – ‘which a person must progressively acquire, and which constitutes a new identity’. This is a process whereby ‘You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self...and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness’ (Eph 4:23-24). It resembles being ‘called by a new name’ (Is 62:2), so that ‘we might walk in newness of life’ (Rom 6:4). Thirdly, Cencini speaks of the process of ‘accompaniment’, indicating the importance of journeying together, not just during... any one part of the way. Life-long accompaniment is necessary to guarantee the continual growth of ‘faith, the experience of God, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit’ in a world where the traditional support systems of ‘vocation’ are scarcely operative”.

Is there any indication of a parallel model in the Writings of St. Vincent Pallotti? As already

¹⁸ Cf. *OOCC* XI, p. 449-450.

stated, our Founder did not use the word *formation* frequently nor precisely. However, we do find that he used a different language to reflect on different educative, formative, pedagogical processes. Let me mention three words, which I believe to be significant:

I) *All are called...* to holiness¹⁹ ... to the apostolate²⁰ ... to cooperation with one another and with God²¹. This is the human vocation.

In these three references there is the clear affirmation that every person is called by God. However, this call is a mystery. Each has to come to know the call by means of a concrete process of the development of self-knowledge, experience of mystery, learning to understand life, and learning how to pray, this latter called by our Founder the “infallible means”²².

In a recent Church document (1997), called: *New Vocations for a New Europe*, discernment efforts were made to unveil the ways in which the youth of today can come to know their vocation and mission within the Church. What they discovered was surprising. It was a return to the classical attractions of the early Church, namely, Liturgy and prayer (*Leiturghìa*), Community and fraternity (*Koinonia*), Charity (*Diakonia*) and Witness (*Martiria*). This is more an educative process, the revelation of the call, and it therefore would seem to be the core of the approach for the Local Coordination Councils.

II) If all are called to strive for perfection, *how much more* must the seminarist or missionary strive... ?²³. How does one come to know his/her unique contribution to the human vocation?

At first glance this may seem to be an expression of superiority, the pursuit of a call above and beyond the call of most. However, in the writings of St. Vincent Pallotti, as we have also already seen, there is no doubting the call of all to perfection. What is expressed in these words *how much more* is the nature of a specific call and personal option to follow that call. It is different from the universal call to holiness, though it includes that too. It is an option for a specific evangelical form of life, and therefore, it is meaningful to speak of *formation* at this level. *Effective members* of the UAC are “specifically characterised by the Pallottine charism”. They “identify themselves with the spirit and mission of St. Vincent Pallotti” and they feel the desire to make an approved act of commitment to the universal apostolate of the Union²⁴. Specific formation guidelines and personal responsibility are obligatory requirements at this level²⁵.

In conclusion it can be said that the UAC is an Association of the Faithful dedicated to the multiplication of apostles for the service of the Church. It does not set out to prioritise a multiplication of Pallottines. Those persons who, in the process of discerning their specific call to the apostolate, decide to be *Effective Members* of the UAC are welcomed.

III) These considerations brought a number of pious people *together...* experience showing that the good done alone is usually lacking, uncertain, and of limited duration...²⁶. What space is needed to exercise one’s contribution to the protection and development of the human vocation?

¹⁹ Cf. *OOCC* II, p. 3.

²⁰ Cf. *OOCC* III, p. 144-146.

²¹ Cf. *OOCC* IV, p. 307.

²² *OOCC* III, p. 191.

²³ Cf. *OOCC* II, p. 4.

²⁴ Cf. *General Statutes*, art. 22-32.

²⁵ Cf. *General Statutes*, art. 35-36.

²⁶ Cf. *OOCC* IV, p. 122-123.

The call to cooperation²⁷ and to a search for belonging²⁸ indicates an excellent basis for ongoing, permanent formation. “The equal dignity of all who belong to the Union... is expressed in a plurality of vocations... so interrelated that each keeps the others vigilant, in continual growth, and dedicated to its own proper service”²⁹. If ever our attention and dedication to our own proper service were to become secondary to our concern about tasks or institutions, then we lapse into much less than we are meant to be. If we retire into our own individualistic world we risk serving self and not Christ and his Church, and every other can become a stranger. In such a state we lose contact, growth and apostolic effectiveness.

The relationship between Education, Formation, and the Search for Belonging is one interconnected process, and cyclic. Though each has its own finality each contributes to the ongoing growth of the others. It is also true to say, though in somewhat different ways, that the contribution of the important tenets of Pallottine spirituality to all three can realise a unitary process. The Coordination Councils of the UAC are the privileged places which must organise and develop such a pedagogical process for the growth of Christian faith and love, to the point of becoming a vocation, a mission, an apostolate that continues to mature and unite all things in Christ.

4. KEY PALLOTTINE CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION, FORMATION AND BELONGING (With reference to the General Statutes UAC)

For St. Vincent Pallotti, as indeed for every Founder, the focal point of all formation is Jesus Christ. “Do you want a perfect example of the perfection of the heavenly Father? You have it in Jesus. He became man to teach men and women how to live their lives in holiness and perfection, similar to the heavenly Father’s perfection. Look, therefore, in faith at your divine Model: Jesus Christ. Profit from the treasures of grace that he gained for you through his holy life. Then you will become as holy and perfect as your heavenly Father”³⁰.

The *treasures of grace* are infinite. In life, every person tends to have preferences, for better or for worse. In terms of the better – the good, the clusters of preferences form an approach, a charism, a spirituality, and a gift of the Holy Spirit. A charism, as a spiritual expression is “a concrete reading of a conscious experience, and the subsequent realisation of an evangelical project. In this sense, it is normal and evangelical to assume that a variety of charisms exist, as partial contributions and developments of the ONE who self-expresses all the treasures and wisdom of God: Jesus (Col 2:3). These distinct charisms, as gifts of the Holy Spirit, demand a variety of co-natural experiences, accents, diverse presences – not contrary – ... The charism conditions (our) spirituality as a partial contribution – not exclusive -, but integrative. The same central elements, that constitute the essence of Consecrated Life, must be specified in one’s particular charism, unless we wish to become something purely peripheral. The Second Vatican Council insisted on this aspect, that enriches the unity of the Church in a pluralistic context”³¹.

What are the specific elements, found in the *General Statutes*, and which taken together form a spiritual Pallottine personality that is somewhat unique, but at the same time is an integrated part of the one body of Christ? The following is a tentative, incomplete list:

A) We are in the Image of God’s Love³²

²⁷ Cf. *OOCC XI*, p. 256-257.

²⁸ Cf. *OOCC X*, p. 86-87 (Cenacle); p. 134 (Nazareth).

²⁹ *General Statutes*, art. 7.

³⁰ *OOCC XIII*, p. 697.

³¹ *Dizionario teologico della vita consacrata*, 1994, p. 1703.

³² Cf. *OOCC XIII*, p. 60; *General Statutes*, art. 15.

“He is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15)

Each person “has the distinctive characteristics of being a living image of God, and of the wholeness of God”. The transformation of this image into the concrete consciousness of a call, or vocation, must not be reduced to being merely a complex human process. It is much more a mysterious divine action that invites our cooperation. It is not something that falls from above or that arrives from the outside. It is an interior journey, a search. The primary objective of the process – and it could well be the only necessary and adequate objective – is to enable each and every person to deepen awareness and the nature of the *image of God* that is within them and that is the foundation of his/her dignity, liberty, sacredness. Whoever discovers every aspect of one’s identity will also come to know that he/she is made in “the likeness” (Gen 1:26) of God. However, as the image of God is hidden within us, to the point of being buried in some cases, formation is a process of education, that is, an *e-ducare*, a bringing to light all that one already is, making it visible, and operative. We “allow ourselves, with our whole hearts, to be permeated by God’s infinite love”.

All of this is well known to uncomplicated people, the honest, the pure of heart. How many mothers, fathers, how many of the elderly, how many of the innocent have taught these things without manuals, nor courses, nor grades... Did not our Founder make of these the very cornerstone of his preaching? Is not the same true of Jesus?

B) All are Called³³

“I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me” (Is 45:4)

“Now the Lord came and stood there, *calling as before*, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening’” (1 Sam 3:10). We are called, before everything else, to listen. “*Fides ex auditu*” (cf. Rom 10:17). In order to listen, there is the need “to be with”, to be still, to await, to concentrate one’s energy, to recuperate attentiveness. The Lord will come (cf. Lk 21:27). The Lord is the Teacher, the true formator. We can wait a lifetime to see Him in person, and have no awareness of the many times He has already arrived, in the many appearances of those we continually encounter, in all that is won, lost, found, gifted, hidden in the great events and in the bits and pieces of every day... To listen! There is no formative process without listening. There is no listening without a “real presence”. “The mission of the Union of Catholic Apostolate is to awaken in all members of the People of God a strong faith, to make them aware of their call to the apostolate”.

C) We are Sent to each other³⁴

“He said to them, ‘Beware of all evil’. And he gave commandment to each of them concerning the neighbour” (Sir 17:14)

We are not sent in virtue of expertise, intelligence, or wealth. We are sent in virtue of who we are, in virtue of our particular talents. We are sent together, to one another and with Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ. The entire life of an apostle is an ongoing rotation of “being called”, “being with” and of “being sent”, of listening and announcing³⁵. We announce to the other what we personally experience through Christ. This is surely what Pope John Paul II meant when he once spoke of the need of “meeting someone wisely”³⁶.

³³ Cf. *OCC IV*, p. 1-2; *General Statutes*, art. 12.

³⁴ Cf. *OCC III*, p. 142; 156-157; 162; *General Statutes*, art. 7.

³⁵ Cf. Mk 3:13-15; cf. *Memory and Prophecy of the Union of Catholic Apostolate*, Rome 1993, n. 16.

³⁶ Cf. George Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 1999, p. 129.

D) The Method – The road of encounter with Christ - to Emmaus and back³⁷

“Were not our hearts burning within us... while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32)

It is certain that one cannot announce the Gospel, the Christ, on the basis of hearsay. Personal experience of the truth is an irrepressible process, an irresistible impulse to communicate to others the way of salvation and mercy experienced. Jesus said to the demoniac: “ ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you’. And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed” (Mk 5:19-20). When the Gospel penetrates a person’s life, one is transformed into an apostle. The disciples of Emmaus were already followers of Jesus, but they became authentic apostles when, having touched the depths of delusion and sadness, by means of a living experience with Him, they finally understood the meaning of word *resurrection*. Does this mean that crises too are precious? They are periods of intensive formative processes during which the living Christ walks with us until our eyes are opened. Then our proclamation is truly different.

E) The Teacher – Jesus Christ, Apostle of the Eternal Father³⁸

“Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb12:2)

Jesus Christ is the One sent by the Father. He knows the project of the Father from beginning to end. “I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me” (Jn 7:29). We come to know this project gradually, never fully. We can also lose what we have come to know. We can never take it for granted, because the Spirit blows where it chooses (cf. Jn 3:8). The formative process is, for St. Vincent Pallotti, “looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2), imitating him in our thoughts, gestures, sentiments, style of life, mentality. “I am the vine... apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Such a process is a gradual, often slow, perhaps wavering, but always progressive transformation in Christ (cf. Gal 4:19). When we will have reached the summit of St. Paul, we will have completed our formation! We could already dispense with formation if we could exclaim as Paul did: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

F) Revive Together the Gifts³⁹

“Revive me according to your word” (Ps 119:25)

Together. It is enough to look at the numbers: 12, 72, ... always multiples of two. When Jesus sent the apostles, he sent them in groups, or at least in twos (cf. Lk 9:2; 10:1; Mt 21:1). The apostle is not a solitary navigator! The word of one confirms that of another, and the Spirit resounds in the one and the other with continual newness. This is not a simple echo effect. It is the story of the saints who generate other saints around themselves. It is the story of founders and the fascination of the charism on followers. What use would the intuition of a founder be without the living and propagated actualisation of the inspiration? Together, the gift is revived, the solitary initiative is easily quenched.

G) Build a (Cenacle) culture of Communion and Collaboration - The most Divine Gift⁴⁰

“The communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you” (2 Cor 13:13)

³⁷ Cf. *OOCC* II, p. 66-67; *General Statutes*, art. 13, 20.

³⁸ Cf. *OOCC* II, p. 5-9; 541; *General Statutes*, art. 2, 16.

³⁹ Cf. *OOCC* IV, p. 143-145; 265; *General Statutes*, art. 6, 19.

⁴⁰ Cf. *OOCC* X, p. 86-87; *General Statutes*, art. 1, 17, 21.

Whoever truly experiences communion can understand the words of the Book of Genesis 2:18 – “It is not good that the man should be alone”. Yet, who has not encountered the obstacles, the difficulties, and the dangers that continually obstruct and even kill communion? On the other hand, who is there who has not witnessed the spontaneous birth, maturation, and development of such communion? Communion is a gift of God, the most divine of divine gifts. Communion requires love, not programmes, and God is love. There is a question, which can puzzle us? Why is communion seemingly easier for the new communities in the Church? Could it be that they are more open to God’s love, while older communities are more dependent on the power of structures?

H) Now is the Opportune Time – Attualità, Signs of the Times⁴¹
“Watch for the opportune time, and beware of evil” (Sir 4:20)

There is a response to the previous question: the life-line of communion is the capacity for collaboration, and collaboration means overcoming every form of egoism, individualism, protagonism and every other form of division. Formation in collaboration is a life-giving experience. It entails a basis respect for the image of God hidden in every other. It is truly a participation in the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the very heart of the Pallottine charism. Collaboration is our response to the needs of the Church and world at the present time. Collaboration with the Holy Spirit and with every other whom we encounter is our method for reading the signs of the times. Such encounter, in the words of Enzo Bianchi “implies a continual discernment between the WORD and words, a labourious process of recognising something of the Word of God in human words, and of His will in the events of history”.

I) Remember that prayer is the infallible means⁴²
“Continue steadfastly in prayer” (Col 4:2)

To say that prayer is the infallible means does not mean that results come easy. We must also remember that prayer is essentially a search. Seek and you shall find. We search for the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God “is like a treasure hidden in a field... is like a merchant in search of fine pearls... is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind” (cf. Mt 13:44-52). St. Vincent Pallotti had an evangelical optimism about the possibility of success in any such search. He advised: “Seek God - and you will find Him. Seek Him in all things – and you will find him in everything. Seek Him always – and you will always find Him”⁴³. However, our Founder was also a realist. He knew of the many who begin prayer and all too soon lose heart. He advises us to “persevere in your prayer life; always remember that perseverance makes our prayers effective and moves the heart of God”. Our Founder makes a very important connection between “seeking” and “persevering”. Many times he used the “verbal triptych” of “humility, confidence, perseverance”. He recommends us to live a life that is akin to a spiritually crucified life of perseverance with Christ⁴⁴. “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” (Jn 6:60).

J) Perfect Model – Mary, Queen of Apostles⁴⁵
“His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you’” (Jn. 2:5)

⁴¹ Cf. *OOCC* I, p. 5, 18-19; IV, p. 120; VII, p. 2-8; *General Statutes*, art. 45.

⁴² Cf. *OOCC* III, p. 191; *General Statutes*, art. 20.

⁴³ *OCL* II, lett. n. 382.

⁴⁴ Cf. *OOCC* III, p. 60.

⁴⁵ Cf. *OOCC* I, p. 67; *General Statutes*, art. 3.

The perfect model of the pedagogical process is Mary, the Mother of God. She had the task of collaborating in the education, formation, and life-long accompaniment of Jesus. She accompanied and sustained His disciples to the event of Pentecost and beyond. She is forever Queen of Apostles. This is a conviction revealed from a faith experience. We have no text of her catechises, nor discourses or conferences. We have but a few words scattered here and there throughout the Gospels. These few words say so much more than the massive quantity of contemporary verbiage. Her silent presence, her faith-filled words, and the power of her intercession, are a perennial teaching and guidance for all. She is the perfect model of formation in that she helps all to be in the contact of obedience with Jesus. In this context we can understand the value of the formative words of St. John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30), and for all involved in the formative process, the following words are of definitive importance: “I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him” (Jn 3:28).

I would like to conclude this section with a Scriptural citation that, with a minimum of words, summarises, in a brief and most creative way, the substance of the preceding reflections:

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (*Education*), with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (*Formation*). There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (*Belonging*)” (Eph 4:1-6).

5. CONCLUSION

Do we have a strong formation dynamic? I have had the experience of attending the funerals of many of our deceased confreres. Many times I met the brothers and sisters of the deceased. I was often struck by how similar they were in attitude, thinking, and mannerisms with our confrere. Somehow, I expect a confrere who studied for at least eight years in Pallottine formation houses to be, certainly not better or worse, but different from a brother or sister who has little opportunity for formation or education, and who often spent their lives on a farm on in the country. I take two messages from this. Vincent Pallotti was correct to place so much emphasis on the Nazareth experience as the bedrock of formative processes. A good family beginning, and then, family continuation, is a very effective program. The second message is this: We surely must be critical of our educative and formative programs. They must be living Cenacles, in the company of the Holy Spirit, and not a sterile system.

There is a particular message here for Coordination Councils of the Union of Catholic Apostolate, especially for the Local Coordination Councils. This message is best expressed in the words of St. Paul to the Romans: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ... Live in harmony with one another; ... associate with the lowly; ... live peaceably with all ...” (cf. Rm 12:9-18). Let prayer be the *infallible means*: “Pray with trust, ask with humility, and return again to ask with perseverance, and do not doubt that you will receive all that is truly good for you”⁴⁶.

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RIASSUNTO - *Formazione apostolica dei membri dell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico, D. Séamus Freeman SAC*

⁴⁶ *OOCC XIII*, p. 647.

La presente relazione muove dallo Statuto Generale dell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico, secondo il testo pubblicato in "Progetto UAC 2000", Roma 1999, e comprende quattro sezioni: i membri dell'UAC, la chiamata ad essere apostoli, la formazione apostolica dei membri, i concetti-chiave pallottini di educazione, formazione e appartenenza.

I membri dell'UAC si distinguono in: membri effettivi, membri collaboratori, amici. Il termine "formazione" assume valenze diverse a seconda dei casi.

La chiamata ad essere "apostoli" rivolta a tutti è la chiara intuizione di san Vincenzo Pallotti. L'UAC cerca di rendere ogni uomo consapevole della missione affidatagli da Dio e capace di realizzare l'apostolato insieme agli altri. Lo Statuto Generale dell'UAC definisce i Consigli di Coordinamento Locali "centri motori di collaborazione e di incontro per sostenere la comune spiritualità e promuovere le diverse iniziative apostoliche" (n. 44). Ad essi compete il compito di creare occasioni concrete di formazione.

Il termine "formazione" compare di rado negli scritti di san Vincenzo Pallotti e con un significato più circoscritto. È necessario trovare parole diverse per esprimere i diversi aspetti di un approccio pedagogico, apostolico e pallottino. Una pedagogia di "formazione" adeguata ai tempi di oggi non deve limitarsi ad imitare le indicazioni contenute nelle origini pallottine, ma rinnovarle. L'educazione, la formazione e la ricerca di appartenenza, correlate tra loro, costituiscono un processo interdipendente e ciclico. Ognuna ha le proprie finalità e al tempo stesso contribuisce alla crescita permanente delle altre. Luogo privilegiato per organizzare tale processo pedagogico sono i Consigli di Coordinamento UAC.

Per san Vincenzo Pallotti il punto focale di tutta la formazione è Gesù Cristo. Ecco gli elementi specifici, riscontrabili nello Statuto Generale, di una persona formata secondo la spiritualità pallottina:

a) La formazione cerca di far scoprire ad ogni uomo l'immagine di Dio che porta in sé e che è il fondamento della sua dignità.

b) Il processo di formazione è una chiamata ad ascoltare il Signore, il vero Formatore. Non c'è formazione senza ascolto.

c) Tutta la vita di un apostolo è fatta di ascolto e di annuncio. Si annuncia ciò che si è sperimentato personalmente: Gesù Cristo.

d) Quando il Vangelo tocca la vita di un uomo, lo trasforma in apostolo.

e) Il processo di formazione è, per Vincenzo Pallotti "guardare a Gesù, autore e perfezionatore della fede" (Eb 12,2) e imitarlo come Apostolo dell'eterno Padre nei pensieri e nello stile di vita.

f) La formazione raggiunge la sua completezza nel ravvivare insieme i doni

g) Costruire (un cenacolo) una cultura di comunione e collaborazione

h) La formazione alla collaborazione è un'esperienza vitale. La collaborazione con lo Spirito Santo e con tutti coloro che incontriamo è il nostro metodo per leggere i segni dei tempi.

i) La preghiera è essenzialmente ricerca del Regno di Dio. San Vincenzo Pallotti, credendo profondamente nella sua efficacia, invitava a "perseverare nella... preghiera".

j) Maria, Regina degli Apostoli (cfr. OCCC I, p. 6-7; St. G. 3) è modello perfetto del processo pedagogico e di formazione in quanto aiuta tutti ad essere in contatto di obbedienza con Gesù.

Una buona vita familiare costituisce una base fondamentale nella formazione di una persona. Dobbiamo essere critici riguardo ai nostri programmi educativi e formativi.

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