

FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE GENERAL STATUTES OF THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

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INTRODUCTION

The erection of the Union of Catholic Apostolate (= UAC) as a public international association of the faithful and the approval of its General Statutes for the Universal Church on 28 October 2003 by the Pontifical Council for the Laity was certainly a definitive phase in the historical development of the charismatic vision of St. Vincent Pallotti¹. Regardless of the difficulty that we often encounter in understanding fully this prophetic vision, the official recognition by the Church must be accepted as the stepping-stone to another phase of its historical development, namely, to formation in the Union in the light of its General Statutes. Needless to say, the current priority is to develop a suitable formation programme that will enable everyone to understand as deeply as possible the nature, the mission and the structural aspects of the Union. Often a lot of the resistance and indifference to the UAC originates from a lack of a profound experience understanding of it. Mere intellectual understanding alone cannot produce the required passion for the Union - a handicap encountered very much up to the present. The juridical character should be supplemented with strong spiritual and apostolic contents, based on the nature, mission and spirituality of the Union, as presented in Part 1 of the General Statutes². The challenge before us today is to present the Union as a tangible and prophetic response to the need of the times. The formation in the Union, if ever it is to be successful, should add flesh and blood to the well-articulated juridical guidelines, which, certainly, lay a solid foundation for any reflection and research on the subject. In short, UAC formation demands an adequate and attractive pedagogy that can touch both the minds and hearts of people.

Realising the need for a formation programme for the Union, the General Coordination Council, on 1st February 2004, approved what are called the “General Orientations for Formation in the Union of the Catholic Apostolate”³. These guidelines, prepared in the light of the UAC General Statutes, present the basic outline for a UAC formation programme. The following are some of the relevant issues considered in these guidelines.

1. FORMATION ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL STATUTES OF THE UNION OF CATHOLIC APOSTOLATE

1. 1. The goal of formation for the Union

The “General Orientations for Formation in the Union of the Catholic Apostolate” describe the goal of formation in the Union as the formation of apostles in the Church, who, in imitation of Jesus, the Apostle of the Eternal Father, are called to carry forward his salvific mission. Pallottine formation

¹ Cfr. Union of Catholic Apostolate, *General Statutes*, Rome 2003, pp. 9-11 (= *UACGS*).

² Cfr. *Ibidem*, pp. 19-22.

³ Cfr. General Secretariat of the Union, *General Orientations for Formation in the Union of the Catholic Apostolate*, Rome 2004 (= *GOFUAC*).

is specifically aimed at enabling the person to mature as one who is created in the image of God. It fosters the growth of a deep faith through contemplation of, and a gradual transformation into, Jesus the Apostle. It strives to incarnate the gift of love as described by St. Paul in I Cor. 13, 4-7, and cited by St. Vincent as the “constitutive element” of his foundation⁴, in a life of communion, in sharing and collaboration. It intends to kindle in every person a Pallottine spirit, an apostolic spirit open to all people, a spirit animated by a love that is concrete and lived in daily life⁵.

1. 2. Subjects of formation

The General Statutes distinguish between the formation of members as well as of the collaborators.

For the members:

- Since “all members of the Union have the same personal responsibility for the entire foundation of St. Vincent Pallotti”⁶, the Union has the obligation to provide an adequate formation that will enable them to fulfil their own duties to the Union.

- For the individual members (and by this is understood not only laypersons but also religious, diocesan priests, etc.) the overall plan of formation is developed by the National Coordination Council (NCC) and approved by the General Coordination Council (GCC)⁷. Ordinarily the formation plan is programmed and implemented at the local level by the Local Coordination Council (LCC)⁸.

- The initial formation and, in a broader sense, the on-going formation of the members of the communities is the competence of the communities of the Union⁹.

For collaborators:

- They express the desire to participate in the spirit of the Union in various forms of collaboration and participation in the activities of the Union¹⁰.

- The Union which accepts their participation and their service has the obligation to nourish and sustain their spirit with formation programmes adapted to the needs of the various forms of collaboration.

1. 3. Places of formation

The places of formation include the community to which the member belongs, Local Coordination Centres, Centres of Pallottine Spirituality.

1. 4. Responsibility for formation

a) The General Coordination Council (GCC)

The General Coordination Council:

- establishes the common, fundamental principles of formation for the whole Union¹¹;

⁴ Cfr. San Vincenzo Pallotti, *Opere complete*, a cura di Francesco Moccia SAC, Curia Generalizia della Società dell’Apostolato Cattolico, Roma 1964-1997, voll. I-XIII (= *OOCC*), qui *OOCC* III, pp. 137-138.

⁵ Cfr. *GOFUAC*, n. 2.I.

⁶ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 36.

⁷ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 35.

⁸ Cfr. *UACGS* n. 28, & 44c.

⁹ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 35.

¹⁰ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 26.

¹¹ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 34 §1.

- establishes the guidelines and defines the objectives of the formation¹²;
- approves the general formation plan prepared by the National Coordination Councils in which the contents are specified.

b) The National Coordination Council (NCC)

The National Coordination Council:

- prepares the methodological outlines and the programmes of formation¹³, establishing the time frame and the necessary conditions for both the initial and on-going formation of the individual members;
- promotes the specific initial and on-going formation¹⁴;
- is responsible for the formation of the individual members¹⁵.

c) The Local Coordination Council (LCC)

The task of the Local Coordination Council is to organize and implement the initial and ongoing formation of the individual members and to support, where pertinent, the communities in their on-going formation programmes¹⁶ this task is to be accomplished following the guidelines and the general formation programmes approved by the GCC and the NCC.

Therefore the LCC is:

- to organize meetings, encounters and seminars to facilitate personal and community growth through prayer and reflection;
- to create concrete opportunities to grow together in the Pallottine apostolate.

d) Personal Responsibility

The tasks and obligations of the Councils are not a substitute for the personal responsibility of each member for her/his own formation. Each member is responsible for her/his personal formation in order to live fully her/his own vocation in the Union, and so to serve the Church and the whole of humanity in the spirit of St. Vincent Pallotti¹⁷.

1. 5. Pedagogy of UAC formation

“If the Church is to reveal her true face, she urgently needs fraternal communities”, John Paul II reminded us¹⁸. The UAC, which is our “way of being Church”, is the answer to the call to build up fraternal communities. If the Union, strongly rooted in the love of Christ, which impels every Christian to be co-responsible for the mission of the Church as genuine apostles, becomes a reality in the Church today, it could very well become our gift for the renewal and building up of the universal Church. The need of the hour is to prepare an attractive formation programme for the Union, adapted to our times.

Pallotti insisted that we must promote inseparably “a spiritual culture, scientific study, and

¹² Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 34 §1.

¹³ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 34 § 2.

¹⁴ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 49b.

¹⁵ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 35 § 3.

¹⁶ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 44c.

¹⁷ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 35 §1.

¹⁸ John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (25 March 1996), n. 45 (= *Vita consecrata*).

ministry”¹⁹. This text of Pallotti for clerical students seems to be applicable in a wider sense for the formation in the Union too. Study must be preceded by the desire for sanctity and guided by the readiness to cooperate for the glory of God and the salvation of humankind. It is therefore necessary that right from the beginning of any such formation programme, an intimate connection is established between the spiritual culture, ecclesiastical sciences, and apostolic experiences²⁰, and this trinomial must constitute the base and the unifying foundation of Pallottine formation. It should be supplemented by a pedagogical approach that will help personal integration and prayerful discernment of the persons.

Considering the theological, spiritual and apostolic richness of the Pallottine icon of the Cenacle, I wish to state here that it presents the necessary key to developing a UAC formation that can respond to the needs of the time. This is not to say that the entire Pallottine charism can be and should be reduced just to the Cenacle although it is certainly rich in itself. To absolutize this icon certainly runs the risk of excluding other elements of truth and riches contained in the Pallottine charism.

2. THE CENACLE - A MODEL OF UAC FORMATION

One of the hallmarks of the spirituality of Pallotti is powerfully seen in his devotion to Mary who constantly accompanies us in our spiritual journey. For Pallotti Mary is, after Christ, the most perfect model of intimacy with God and of our apostolic life. To be devoted to Mary means to imitate Jesus, Mary’s Son and learn from her how to imitate Him. In Pallotti’s Marian devotion, it goes without saying that the Cenacle in Jerusalem takes a unique place.

The Cenacle scene, according to Acts.1:13-14, clearly describes that the people who were present together were the eleven Apostles chosen by Jesus, and the women along with Mary, the mother of Jesus. They united themselves in prayer “with one mind and one heart”. They were all waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit according to the promise made by Jesus. Later they chose Mathias in the place of Judas and all these were present in the upper room, when the Holy Spirit descended with a rush of violent wind and filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages. Even though they were bereft of the physical presence of Jesus, their prayer life united them - a perfect example of Christian life. And Mary remained at the very centre of this community of faith. In fact, the “perfect model of this apostolic spiritual life is the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles. While on earth her life was like that of any other, filled with labour and the cares of the home; always, however, she remained intimately united to her Son and cooperated in an entirely unique way in the Saviour’s work”²¹.

This is the reason why Pallotti considered the apostolic presence of Mary as very important in the life of all Christians. It is as a mark of this spiritual conviction that he requested the artist Serafino Cesaretti to paint the Cenacle scene with Mary, the Queen of Apostles, the apostles and other lay women. The original of this painting hangs above the altar of the Church of “Regina degli Apostoli” at Via Giuseppe Ferrari, in the City of Rome.

This portrait presents a perfect example of the Ecclesiology of Pallotti. For Pallotti, “priests, religious and lay persons have in Mary the perfect example of catholic zeal and perfect charity. She laboured so much in the works of the greater glory of God and the salvation of men and women, that although she lacked priestly dignity, she surpassed the Apostles in merit. This is the reason why the Church calls her Queen of the Apostles”²². Because Mary is the prototype of the Apostolate of

¹⁹ Cfr. *OOCC* I, pp. 152-189.

²⁰ Cfr. *OOCC* I, pp. 171-177.

²¹ Vatican Council II, Decree on the apostolate of lay people *Apostolicam actuositatem* (1965), n. 4.

²² *OOCC* I, p. 7.

Christians, she merited to be Queen of Apostles. With her apostolic work and with her prayer, she, after Christ, remains a perfect model of the true Catholic zeal. Pallotti, therefore, was convinced that Mary did not need the holy priesthood to become the Queen of Apostles. St. Vincent, in founding the Union of the Catholic Apostolate, for the purpose of animating all Catholics, priests, religious and lay persons, chose this portrait, thereby providing the basic components of a “new way of being Church”. In this model of being the Church, every member of the faithful is called to be an apostle, in imitation of Jesus, the Apostle of the Eternal Father, and is co-responsible for the mission of the Church, with equal dignity. It is this very unique portrait, which is deeply rooted in the spirituality of Pallotti, that could provide us with the foundation for a formation model for the Union. However, this is not to rule out other models and approaches to UAC formation. Such openness will be indeed a testimony to the universality and greatness of the spirit and prophetic vision of our Founder.

Regarding the Cenacle, Pallotti wrote in his spiritual notes: “Wherever I shall be, I shall picture myself as one among all in the upper room where the apostles received the Holy Spirit. I shall remind myself to renew this feeling often. As the Apostles were there with Mary, so will I be in spirit with my beloved Mother and Jesus. As she is my special intercessor, I am sure she will help me and all other creatures to receive the abundance of the Holy Spirit, and since I desire that this abundance of the Spirit of the Lord increase in me and all creatures,...so with all the creatures I intend to stay always in this Cenacle”²³.

The UAC General Statutes describe the same “Cenacle experience” in the following words: “In communion with Mary, Queen of Apostles, the members of Union commit themselves to prepare the way of Christ in human hearts. They unite with her in prayer, like the apostles in the Cenacle, to ask for the strength of the Holy Spirit (cfr. Acts 1:13-14) who continually enables them to receive and pass on that love which renews all things (cfr. Ps 104:30)”²⁴.

As a result of such an experience, the UAC General Statutes state once again: “The members seek to live a unity grounded in evangelical love and wherever they find themselves they form groups characterised by a missionary spirit and are open to collaboration among themselves and with others (cfr. Jn 13,34-35; 15,12; 17,21)”²⁵.

Thus the Cenacle - together with Mary, Queen of Apostles, “the perfect model of both the spiritual and apostolic life”²⁶ - becomes the “place” of universal communion to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit who impels us to go and teach all the nations (cfr. Mt 28, 19). The Cenacle is the concrete and visible expression of an apostolic community, which is, with one heart, joined constantly in prayer (cfr. Acts 1, 14) and evangelical love. It is the school of communion, which under the action of the Holy Spirit and the maternal guidance of Mary, the Queen of Apostles forms apostles of Jesus. Thus the Cenacle symbolises and contains in the most perfect manner the prophetic gift of the Union of the Catholic Apostolate, as accepted by the Church today: “The Union of Catholic Apostolate (Unio Apostolatus Catholici: U.A.C.), gift of the Holy Spirit, is a communion (communio) of those faithful who, inspired by the charism of St. Vincent Pallotti, promote the corresponsibility of all the baptised to revive faith and rekindle charity in the Church and in the world bringing all to unity in Christ”²⁷.

In fact, the Cenacle is the crucible of a transforming experience and therefore contains an effective formative pedagogy. The upper room provided the formation house for the apostles, as “all these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers” (Acts 1, 14). Constant prayer in a community of faith

²³ *OOCC X*, p. 86.

²⁴ *UACGS*, n. 17.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, n. 19.

²⁶ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 3.

²⁷ *UACGS*, n. 1.

under the guidance of Mary has been an important element of the formative pedagogy of the Cenacle. As a result, the ordinary, timid disciples were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit into courageous preachers and witnesses of the Risen Lord. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2, 4). Indeed, the Cenacle symbolises the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Mary is a formator par excellence because she allows her Son to be born in the lives of people. Pallotti, desiring to be totally transformed into Jesus, asks Mary, the “teacher of spiritual life”²⁸, to obtain for him this grace. Likewise, in the itinerary of Pallottine formation, it is Mary who leads the persons in formation to the interior knowledge of Christ and intimacy with the Holy Trinity. For this significant spiritual and apostolic inspiration and guidance of Mary, Queen of Apostles, in the life of the Church, Pallotti placed his entire foundation under her Patronage²⁹. Devotion to Mary is the surest path to transformation into Jesus, the Apostle of the Father.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE CENACLE MODEL OF UAC FORMATION

There can never be a perfect model of formation. However, basing ourselves on some of the most important themes and experiences of Pallottine spirituality and charism, particularly that of Cenacle, we can develop the basic spiritual principles of a new approach to UAC formation, which can be called a Cenacle Model of UAC Formation. Some of these spiritual principles are the following:

3.1. Rooted in the experience of the infinite love and mercy of God

The triune God that Pallotti experienced was a God of infinite love and mercy. “O my God, infinite love of my soul, ineffable mercy!”³⁰ - these words were the expression of a profound mystical experience. By its very nature, experience is something that touches the very core of one’s being. The Cenacle Model of UAC Formation aims at helping the persons to experience God’s love and mercy, manifested in diverse ways in their personal history. Sharing of faith experience should constitute therefore an essential part of such a UAC formation. Helping to confront one’s own limitations and sinfulness can often become a powerful experience of the love and mercy of God. The important aspect here is that UAC formation should aim not only at an intellectual, theological preparation but also focus on an experience of God and his infinite love and mercy in one’s personal life.

3.2. Jesus, God made Man and Apostle of the Father - Centre of Integration

The centre of integration of all dimensions of formation - human, intellectual, spiritual, and apostolic - is Jesus, God made Man and Apostle of the Father. As Pallotti writes: “Stirring up our faith we should remember that the God-Man has become our exemplar and model and the practical rule of our whole life, internal and external”³¹. The fundamental aim of Pallottine formation is therefore the continuous effort to transform ourselves into Jesus, the Apostle of the Father, through the unfailing spiritual dynamic of self-emptying (*kenosis*). Our Founder expresses it in these words: “May all my life be destroyed and the may the life of Jesus alone be my life. May the life of our Lord Jesus Christ be the perfect criterion, the science, and the prayer...”³². This implies that the search for

²⁸ Cfr. *OOCC* X, p. 159.

²⁹ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 3.

³⁰ Cfr. *OOCC* XIII, p. 129.

³¹ *OOCC* III, pp. 36-37.

³² *OOCC* X, pp. 618-625.

perfection of the self or society alone cannot be considered the ultimate goal of Christian or Pallottine formation. The goal should always be the imitation of the entire life of Christ. This means striving for the perfection of Charity, as God alone is Charity in Essence³³.

3.3. Holy Spirit - the Transforming Presence

The Holy Spirit is the principle agent of change, transformation, and renewal. Our call is to be Spirit-filled people and this becomes possible when we walk by the Spirit, as Pallotti prayed: “All powerful and merciful Jesus, destroy my whole life, transform it into your life and that of the Blessed Trinity, and may it be an eternal contemplation, eternal delight, eternal communication of the Holy Spirit”³⁴. The Cenacle Model of UAC Formation is founded on dependence on the transforming and discerning presence of the Holy Spirit.

3.4. Under the patronage of Mary, Queen of Apostles

Another aspect of such a model of formation is that it is accomplished under the guidance of Mary, Queen of Apostles. Mary, for our Founder, is the missionary par excellence, the model for Christian living and a great formator who constantly teaches us to follow her Son Jesus. Pallotti writes: “In his infinite love God places Mary, ... before our eyes as our model. She followed our Lord Jesus Christ on the road to redemption so closely that she surpasses all angels and saints in holiness, in grace and in justice. At the same time, through his only-begotten Son, God gives her to us as our Mother. Through her intercession and the sublime example of her whole life we are urged to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in faith, with a deep and confident love”³⁵.

Our commitment to Mary, therefore, is not merely a devotion. It has deep spiritual, theological, pastoral foundations and implications for the life and mission of our members. The Pallottine mariology must be made an intrinsic part of our spiritual, theological, pastoral, and human formation.

3.5. To be the image and likeness of God: Pallottine anthropological model for formation

For any formation programme it is important that there exist a complete and adequate vision of the human person under formation. Here too our Founder provides us with the necessary elements for a comprehensive Christian anthropological vision. Following the Biblical tradition, Pallotti visualises the human person as “a living image of the eternal, infinite, immense and incomprehensible God”. But the human being misused his privileged position as the crown of creation (cfr. Gen 1, 26-27) and rejected God’s love, so much so that his condition could very well be described as “nothingness and sin” (*nihilum et peccatum*). But the infinite love and mercy of God became once more operative. God, through his Son, the first-born brother and image of the Father (cfr. Rom 8, 27-30), restored to the human being that “likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin”³⁶. The human vocation, therefore, is to attain perfection by imaging Christ, the divine model³⁷. Perfection by imaging Christ means perfection in charity because Jesus was moved by love to become our Redeemer and did everything for love of the Father and his redemptive love for humankind: “Man is created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore man, according to the

³³ Cfr. *OOCC* III, pp. 151, 218.

³⁴ *OOCC* XI, p. 24.

³⁵ San Vincenzo Pallotti, *Lettere latine. Lettera a D. Melia e D. Faà di Bruno*, in *OOCC* XIII, pp. 807-808.

³⁶ Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, n. 22.

³⁷ Cfr. *OOCC* XIII, p. 697.

essence of his creation, is an image and likeness of Charity in Essence...since You are the same Charity in Essence, we are therefore by the very nature of our creation obliged to perfect ourselves, as we are living images of You, charity in essence”³⁸.

Therefore, Pallottine anthropology reminds us that one’s true self-esteem should be based ultimately on the most fundamental ontological and theological truth, namely, that one is created in the “image and likeness of God” and hence is honourable, precious and lovable (cfr. Is 43, 4). At the same time, this self is limited and finite. Such a vision is never intended to create an all-positive and unrealistic sense of self or a totally negative image of self, as some anthropological models seem to suggest. Both approaches are equally partial and inadequate. The Christian vision of the human person believes that it is in Christ, fully God and fully human, that these two anthropological opposites are reconciled and integrated, leading to a human maturity marked by the perfection of charity. Only such a mature self is capable of dying to itself because one can lose oneself only when one has found one’s self. And to find one’s self requires the closest collaboration between nature and grace. Helping to discover and enabling to be truly the “living image God”, can very well be described as the very essence of human formation. In UAC formation too, every effort must be made to enable the person to grow in genuine human maturity. A lot of difficulties faced in building up communion among persons and communities, which lie at the very core of the charism, are related to human immaturities and limitations. In an atmosphere of faith, the persons under formation must be given the necessary help to know themselves deeply and to grow themselves into mature beings, capable of giving themselves to God and others with interior freedom and selflessness.

4. DIMENSIONS OF THE CENACLE MODEL OF UAC FORMATION

4.1. Formation as a communitarian event

Formation can indeed take place only through relationships in communities, as we are reminded: “Since the formation must be also communitarian, its privileged place, for the Institutes of Religious Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, is the community”³⁹. This can also be true of UAC formation. Vincent Pallotti had the most sublime understanding of community. He said that a formation house must be like the “House of Bethlehem”⁴⁰ and the “House of Nazareth”⁴¹. The pedagogy of Nazareth, he insisted, “should be preserved as the norm of our houses, that is, of the Holy Retreats of our little Congregation”⁴². Following this pedagogy, the candidates are led to progress, like Jesus, in wisdom, age and grace before God and men, and until they reach a mature age to avail themselves for the public ministry⁴³. These thoughts of our Founder remind us of the vital role that the community plays in formation. The Local Community is indeed the natural environment of Pallottine formation. To achieve such a goal, it is required that our communities really become “Holy Retreats”, “Cenacle Communities”. Thus, formation of individual persons can take place in communities of faith and love.

4.2. Pallottine formator as a “Man of God”

Good UAC formation would also require good formators. Should we not also think of

³⁸ Cfr. *OOCC* III, pp. 151, 218.

³⁹ *Vita consecrata*, n. 67.

⁴⁰ Cfr. *OOCC* II, pp. 15-16.

⁴¹ Cfr. *OOCC* VII, p. 111.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ Cfr. *OOCC* VII, p. 112.

preparing certain members of the Union for such a task, just as we prepare formators in the core communities of the Union?

Vincent Pallotti considered the formator, above all, as a “man of God” who gives himself to his mission “day and night”⁴⁴. The primary and most important task of a formator is the spiritual accompaniment of the person in formation, and discernment is the heart of spiritual accompaniment. For this, formators are to be persons who have personal experience of God, capable of discerning the action of the Holy Spirit in the life and vocational journey of the person in formation, and are humanly integrated and committed to the task. Intellectual/doctrinal training alone does not make such a formator. He/she has to be a person who has undergone the Cenacle Experience. The UAC General Secretariat, in collaboration with the National Coordination Councils, could plan out formation programmes of UAC formators at the national and international levels.

4.3. Formation in and for the Union

Such Cenacle Communities constitute essentially the Union of Catholic Apostolate. The Union must no longer be seen as an abstract theological concept but it is a concrete and specific way of living the Christian life. It is the ecclesial reality of communion, so beautifully termed as an “evangelical trumpet” which invites all to the Catholic Apostolate and re-kindles the zeal and charity that are necessary for such apostolic engagement⁴⁵. Pallottine formation at all times needs to be a formation in the spirit of the “evangelical trumpet”, in the womb of the Church. It is the opportune moment in history for such an ecclesial reality to take a tangible expression with definite doctrinal content as well as pastoral praxis. This prophetic vision of Pallotti becomes attractive to the extent that it is capable of touching both the minds and the hearts of people of all walks of life. The Union, as a tangible ecclesial reality, must therefore develop a concrete spiritual and apostolic project of Christian perfection and living, apostolic engagement, praying, singing, gathering, faith-sharing etc. We have certainly a definitive answer to this requirement in the Cenacle Model.

The UAC General Statutes state that the members of the Union groups preserve communion with God and with each other through meditation on the Sacred Scriptures, celebration of the Eucharist as the centre of their lives, personal and communal prayer, faith-sharing, reconciliation leading to continuous conversion, active apostolic involvement etc.⁴⁶. These spiritual and apostolic practices must not be isolated acts but parts of a project of spiritual and apostolic formation in the spirit of the Union. Such formation will involve not only theological input but also actual experiences of prayer, faith-sharing discernment and spiritual accompaniment. It should be intensive and continuous, and experienced in a praying and discerning community. It is the commitment to such a human, spiritual, theological and apostolic formation which constitutes the Cenacle Model of formation.

5. A CONCRETE SUGGESTION FOR CENACLE MODEL OF UAC FORMATION

Formation is effective to the extent that it has a clear and effective pedagogy. In addition to the formation programmes and processes that already exist, I wish to propose here yet another concrete formative pedagogy which can contribute greatly to a Cenacle model of UAC Formation. In some parts of the Pallottine world such a model of formation is already operative and has been

⁴⁴ Cfr. *OOCC* I, p. 155.

⁴⁵ Cfr. *OOCC* I, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶ Cfr. *UACGS*, n. 20.

found to be very effective⁴⁷.

The proposal is to develop a discernment retreat consisting of 31 days of Cenacle Experience - an intense, in-depth, contemplative type of spiritual retreat based on 31 Pallottine themes elaborated in the light of Scripture and concrete human experiences. Why 31 days? Pallotti on several occasions uses the number 31. He writes of 31 Eucharistic Meditations⁴⁸. He treats the Creed in the same manner. This model, like the 30 days of an Ignatian Retreat, can be something unique to the Pallottine tradition.

The psycho-spiritual pedagogy involving the Word of God, silent reflection, prayer, spiritual diary writing, and faith sharing with the spiritual guide is a powerful process which can help the integral growth of the individual person profoundly. The whole retreat can be a spiritual itinerary involving a profound spiritual discernment aimed at the discovery and integration of one's human, Christian and Pallottine identities.

It is to be a two-way discernment process. In the first part, reflecting on the Word of God in an atmosphere of silence and prayer the person gains many graces and insights. The Scripture says: "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joint from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4, 12). In order that the Word of God may act powerfully in us, it is important, as Pallotti reminds us, to maintain that "space of silence and solitude with God"⁴⁹. It is also the moment of the examen of consciousness, which is so important for the discernment of spirits, according to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. In the second part, the person shares with his spiritual guide these psycho-spiritual experiences and insights which leads to the deepening of his understanding into the mystery of God and self. The newly acquired insights are once again discerned in the light of the Word of God in silence, and thus the process goes on. Spiritual diary writing, following the example of our Founder himself, can be another useful tool in making explicit the action of the Spirit through one's life experiences.

Thus during the 31 days of such an intensive spiritual journey, the personal history of the individual is called forth and probed by God's transforming grace, and the gifts born of that history are cultivated for mission within the heritage of the Pallottine family. This is an intense and in-depth formation that can lead to changes at the motivational level and to true conversion of heart, metanoia.

The Cenacle Model invites us to live the mystical and contemplative dimension of the Pallottine charism more profoundly. It is a need of the world today; it is a need of our Pallottine family too. Just as Pallotti was a mystic and apostle, every dimension of our life needs to be impregnated with a greater sense of mysticism and contemplation. Just as "finding God in all things" became the hallmark of Ignatian spirituality and discernment, a Pallottine is to be formed to "breathe in God and breathe out God"⁵⁰. The contemplative prayer suggested by Pallotti consisted of "aspirations and respirations with which the humble and devout soul, without words, but with the liveliest affection of the heart, reaches out to God and would seek to draw all of God to itself"⁵¹. It is such a contemplative attitude of continuous "seeking of God" that is to be introduced to those who are aiming to become apostles of Jesus. Being an apostle of Jesus means also to be constantly aware of being sent out to continue his saving mission. But the true Pallottine apostolate is the one that flows from a life of sanctity.

⁴⁷ For example, Fr. Tomy Churathil SAC has been conducting "Cenacle Retreat" of 40 days at Bilaspur, India, since many years with great participation from bishops, priests, religious and lay people.

⁴⁸ Cfr. *OOCC* XI, pp. 441-443.

⁴⁹ Cfr. *OOCC* III, p. 44.

⁵⁰ Cfr. San Vincenzo Pallotti, *Lettere (anni 1834-1838)*, vol. II, a cura di Bruno Bayer SAC, Curia Generalizia della Società dell'Apostolato Cattolico, Roma 1997, l. 308, p. 24.

⁵¹ Cfr. *OOCC* II, p. 65.

CONCLUSION

The Cenacle Model of UAC Formation, therefore, aims at the progressive transformation/conversion of the members and collaborators of the Union through a formative process involving a more contemplative, experiential, and in-depth living of the spiritual and apostolic contents of our charism. The Cenacle is the crucible of the transforming experience by the power of the Holy Spirit; it stands for the apostolic community of faith and love, under the Patronage of Mary, Queen of Apostles; it is the ideal model of being and living the Church of communion as envisaged in the charismatic vision of the Union of Catholic Apostolate. It is really in such a community of communion that the apostles of Jesus are formed, to be sent out in order to continue his mission.

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RIASSUNTO della relazione di Jacob Nampudakam SAC, *Formazione alla luce dello Statuto Generale dell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico*.

L'erezione dell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico (= UAC) come associazione pubblica internazionale di fedeli e l'approvazione del suo Statuto Generale nel 28 ottobre 2003 dal Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici devono essere considerate una pietra miliare che segna una nuova fase dello sviluppo storico della visione carismatica di san Vincenzo Pallotti. La priorità attuale è sviluppare un programma di formazione adeguato che renda ognuno capace di capire e sperimentare, il più profondamente possibile, la natura, la missione e gli aspetti strutturali dell'Unione.

Consapevole della necessità di un programma di formazione per l'Unione, il Consiglio Generale di Coordinamento il primo febbraio 2004 approvò "Le linee guida per la formazione nell'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico". Secondo queste linee guida, lo scopo della formazione nell'Unione è la formazione di apostoli nella Chiesa, i quali, nell'imitazione di Gesù Apostolo dell'eterno Padre, sono chiamati a portare avanti la sua missione salvifica. I soggetti della formazione sono i membri e i collaboratori dell'Unione. I luoghi della formazione includeranno la comunità, alla quale appartiene il membro, i Centri di Coordinamento Locale e i Centri di Spiritualità Pallottiana. La responsabilità per la formazione è condivisa tra il Consiglio di Coordinamento Generale (CCG), il Consiglio di Coordinamento Nazionale (CCN), il Consiglio di Coordinamento Locale (CCL) e, soprattutto, la persona che assume personalmente questo compito.

La formazione nell'Unione, se vuole ottenere successo, esige un'adeguata e attrattiva pedagogia che possa toccare sia la mente sia il cuore. Considerando la ricchezza teologica, spirituale e apostolica dell'originale icona pallottiana del Cenacolo, si afferma che la vera chiave dello sviluppo della formazione dell'UAC può essere trovata nel Cenacolo. Ciò non vuol dire che il carisma pallottiano si esaurisca o debba essere ridotto al Cenacolo. La scena del Cenacolo, dipinta da Serafino Cesaretti su richiesta del Pallotti e descritta negli At 1,13-14, dove gli undici Apostoli di Gesù e le donne con Maria supplicavano al Padre il dono dello Spirito, rappresenta l'esempio perfetto dell'ecclesiologia pallottiana. In questo modo di essere Chiesa, ogni fedele è chiamato ad essere apostolo e imitatore di Gesù Apostolo dell'eterno Padre; è anch'egli responsabile della missione della Chiesa in uguale dignità con tutti gli altri fedeli. Questo "nuovo modo d'essere Chiesa" è l'Unione dell'Apostolato Cattolico come la intendeva san Vincenzo Pallotti. Essere Chiesa in questa maniera è una "esperienza del Cenacolo" come descritto nello Statuto Generale dell'Unione: "I membri dell'Unione, in comunione con Maria, Regina degli Apostoli, si impegnano a preparare la via a Cristo nel cuore degli uomini. Come nel Cenacolo si uniscono insieme con Lei in preghiera, per chiedere la forza dello Spirito Santo (cfr. At 1,13-14)". Perciò il Cenacolo è il più perfetto modello di vita spirituale e apostolica e l'esperienza di trasformazione decisiva. Come si può constatare, il Cenacolo contiene anche un'effettiva pedagogia formativa.

I principi spirituali che sono alla base di un modello di formazione dell'UAC possono essere, tra gli altri: un profondo radicamento nell'esperienza dell'amore e della misericordia infiniti di Dio;

Gesù, Dio fatto uomo e Apostolo del Padre come Centro di integrazione; lo Spirito Santo come presenza trasformante; Maria Regina degli Apostoli come patrona; l'essere immagine e somiglianza di Dio come modello antropologico per la formazione. Tale formazione è sempre un evento comunitario. Il formatore, così insisteva il nostro Fondatore, deve essere un "uomo di Dio" che dedichi se stesso alla sua missione "giorno e notte". Tale formazione infine dovrebbe essere attuata sempre nello spirito dell'Unione e per l'Unione, cioè, nello spirito della "evangelica tromba" e costruendo la realtà ecclesiale della comunione.

Come pedagogia formativa concreta del modello di Cenacolo della formazione dell'Unione, possiamo indicare i 31 giorni di esperienza del Cenacolo come un'intensa, profonda e contemplativa forma di esercizi spirituali basati sui 31 temi elaborati alla luce della Scrittura e delle esperienze concrete delle persone. Questa può essere una forma originale e in accordo con le tradizioni pallottiane.

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