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OVERVIEW

Foundational Formation – Formator Formation

We have designed our ***Foundational Formation*** process —

- to address professional and educational requirements
- to assist the ongoing transformation of the heart
- to support formators in their practical day-to-day ministry as formators

Professional Capacity

Developing professional capacity on the academic, practical, and human skills levels is indispensable for today's formators. Expanding one's professional capacity as a formator enhances the overall probability of designing, implementing, and coordinating a healthy, comprehensive, and integrated formation process for persons-in-formation. Accountability to their Order, Society, Congregation, and/or Diocese increases when formators have the necessary formator formation and are supported in their day-to-day formation work.

Personal Transformation

As a role model, a formator's quality-of-presence conveys a distinctive message about his or her authenticity and commitment to the transformative process of formation. This is the same identical transformative process of the heart that formators invite persons-in-formation to enter into as they journey under their direction. Formators cannot offer to others what they do not possess themselves. Formators cannot accompany persons-in-formation into areas where they themselves have not stepped foot. Concerning human formation, formators must first do their own personal work.

Invitation to Reflect

Throughout the program formators will be invited to reflect on —

- *how* they professionally and personally approach formation work and ministry
- *how* their unique obstacles and facilitating qualities might hinder or enhance their ability to be a helpful and successful formator
- *how* they model life as a healthy, integrated, mature, and peace-filled consecrated person, i.e. from a *Reflective Living* perspective
- *how* the various aspects of their particular piece of formation complements the

greater part of their Order, Society's, Congregation's, Diocese's overall formation philosophy, charism, and specific goals.

Who Would Benefit?

Our *Foundational Formation* program, is for religious and clergy —

- whose primary ministry involves working along with — vocational candidates, aspirants, postulants, novices, philosophers, theologians, members in transition in ministry programs, those in special studies, diocesan seminarians, etc.
- charged with following-up with members who have been recently ordained and/or professed
- superiors and directors who are missioned with the coordination, continuity, stability, integration, and accountability for the initial and ongoing human formation needs and programs of their Congregation, Society, or Diocese.

Initial Formation

FCS accents the human dimension of formation. The human dimension impacts and influences the spiritual, communal, intellectual/professional, and the apostolic/ministerial dimensions. Access to the human dimension unfolds through cultivating the **capacity to reflect back upon human experience**. The primary overall questions of inquiry throughout initial formation for persons-in-formation and their formators would be the following.

- In what manner does any particular experience impact the unclogging or clogging-up of the human heart?
- How is the individual impacted?
- How does the individual impact others?

Since the heart's condition of openness or closed-downness influences a person's thoughts and feelings, and thus behaviors, it is essential for a person throughout initial formation to **cultivate and mature in self-awareness, in wide-eyed open consciousness**. Failure to grasp how people, events, things, and situations of the day impact the heart, the human dimension, will complicate significantly the capacity to grow and ripen within the spiritual, communal, intellectual/ professional, and the apostolic/ministerial dimensions.

Human Formation: Transforming and Cultivating the Human Heart

This essential piece assists the Province and its formator(s) to research, develop, hone, and write a comprehensive and dovetailing document to direct the Province, its formators and persons-in-formation. The document provides **focus, guidance** and **consistency**. It fosters **confidence** and **assurance** within the leadership, with formators, and with persons-in-formation. By articulating the Province's expectations for persons-in-formation concerning their growth and the step-by-step processes within each period of initial formation, this will help to facilitate the movement forward for persons-in-formation. Initial formation would unfold as a **methodical, comprehensive, and co-responsible** process. It would cultivate **receptivity, openness, integration, and maturity** that would result in establishing the foundation for taking-up religious life and its charism in a manner cascading with **ease, joy** and **peacefulness**. The

manual, *Human Formation: Transforming and Cultivating the Human Heart* is a vision and roadmap for human formation.

In turn, through this document, all the members of the Province would possess a revitalized understanding of initial and ongoing formation's importance, impact, and influence. The Province, its formators and persons-in-formation would grow in appreciation *from* where they are coming, *to* where they are going, and *through* which processes they will draw upon to move toward maturity.

Formation of the Formator and Ongoing Supervision

FCS forms formators by focusing upon their **personal human development**, supporting them in honing their **reflective capacity**, along with assisting them to gain the **necessary expertise** to facilitate various initial human formation processes. Through *FCS* processes formators become competent formators who feel confident in their direction and skills concerning accompanying persons-in-formation during their particular phase(s) of initial formation. Through *FCS's Foundational Formation for Formators*, formators learn to take-up the following processes with their persons-in-formation.

Vocational Discernment

Initial steps in the process of becoming a reflective human being

Postulancy/Candidacy

Family-of-Origin

Being a Girl, Becoming a Woman, or

Being a Boy, Becoming a Man

Impact of Culture

Reflective Living

Annual Individualized Formation Plan

Journaling's Role in Cultivating Reflecting on Experience

Reflection Papers

Formator-Formand Sessions

Adjustments based on culture by Province, formators and *formandi*

Novitiate

Cultivation of the Human Heart

Cultivation of Humility and Appreciation

Period of temporary/simple profession, etc

ongoing cultivation of the above processes, maturing as a reflective person

Telephone Consultation/Supervision

follow-up and follow-through

The roadmap and processes for the phases of initial formation remain in the service of **insuring a high degree of confidence**. The community's leadership will possess the necessary assurance and confidence that the person-in-formation has cultivated a significant degree of **integration, openheartedness, freedom, human capacities, and maturity**. This will facilitate

living life and ministry in a life-nurturing, joy-enhancing, and peace-filling manner through a maturing and ripening of reflective consciousness and self-awareness.

In part, the above initial formation processes assist persons-in-formation to integrate their capacity to be **reflective human beings**. Throughout initial formation persons-in-formation cultivate their awareness of

- who they are
- how they have become who they are today
- how people and situations impacted them in the past, and in the here and now today, both in helpful and unhelpful ways, and
- how they impact others today, again in helpful, as well as unhelpful ways.

They will move toward integration of *how* they take-up cultivating an open and an unclogged heart, to be continuously on the journey of conversion and transformation of heart. In turn they will gain insight into, and wide-eyed-open awareness of their human insecurities, i.e. their self-interest-ego-strivings, e.g. rigid in thinking, judgmentalism, harshness, functionalism, perfectionism, insistence, over-extension, etc. Self-interest-ego strivings clog-up the heart. A constricted heart causes difficulties, frustrations, agitation, and stress. It contributes to imbalance and drivenness concerning life within the community and ministry, including one's relationship with self, others and God.

At its core, initial formation focuses upon the integration of the human dimension. In turn, it cultivates conversion and transformation of the heart, the unclogging and the unfolding of the human heart. All formation, initial and ongoing, remains in the service of integrating the human dimension in order to cultivate the charism resulting in an intimate relationship with self, others and God. This supports the apostolic purpose of the Order, Society, Congregation, Institute, and Diocese.

Ongoing Formation

FCS takes up ongoing formation from a specific human reality, i.e. all life is formative. Everything impacts the human heart, which in turn influences thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The human heart struggles continuously within a dynamic of unclogging and opening-up versus clogging-up and constricting. The reality is that everyday life just happens to bring about disappointments, irritations, frustrations, hassles, struggles, difficulties, worries, challenges, stresses, and hurts.

These daily life experiences along with the insecurities of self-interest-ego strivings tend to clog-up and constrict the human heart. They interrupt life's flow of ease, joy, and peacefulness. They disrupt a person's self-awareness, and in turn their capacity to live harmoniously within community, to work with ease in ministry, as well as to contribute toward the well-being of the Province and Diocese.

In this manner, the human dimension affects and shapes the spiritual, communal, intellectual/professional, and apostolic/ministerial dimensions. Consequently, it is helpful for ongoing formation to focus upon assisting vowed/professed sisters, brothers and priests in **assuming personal responsibility** for their ongoing formation within the human dimension. As with initial formation, continuous formation needs to have an **intentional focus on integration within the human dimension**. It is the human dimension that clutters-up and constricts the heart. In turn, this heart-clutter interferes and obstructs the individual from unfolding the day in joy, ease, and peacefulness.

Integration within the human dimension is accomplished in part through cultivating **conscious and intentional daily conversion and transformation of the heart**. Embracing and undertaking a reflective stance toward daily life and learning to extract the wisdom from the day's experience accomplishes this. In turn, this facilitates placing the nitty-gritty of the day into perspective. Perspective gives way to rebalancing the self gently, reducing stress compassionately, and refocusing on life's bigger picture openheartedly in order to prepare for tomorrow's involvements and interactions. Wide-eyed-awake consciousness toward daily **conversion and transformation of the heart is a specific and intentional way of living**. In this manner, daily life can unfold with joy, ease, and peacefulness no matter one's life, community or ministerial situation.

Ongoing Formation Vision: The Continuing Roadmap

The reality for most vowed/professed sisters, brothers and priests within this phase of continuous and ongoing formation is that their **initial formation rarely accented cultivation and integration within the human dimension**. It did not include significant Human Formation. Though Constitutions and formation documents highlight the importance of continuous formation, there are two realities concerning this area of formation for most consecrated persons.

One, most **documents remain underdeveloped** offering only a broad sweeping brushstroke of direction and guidance concerning how to take up the cultivation of the human dimension within ongoing and continuous formation. **Second**, when there is some accent on integration within the human dimension, it tends to be approached through theory and concepts, courses and workshops. In this manner, ongoing formation tends to be taken up through an **informational approach** rather than a **formative approach**. Ongoing formation calls for comprehensive, integrative, and holistic processes that touch the heart and not just the mind. **Working with story and everyday life experience is the sacred text through which FCS prefers to work.**

The human dimension impacts the ministerial and apostolic dimension, as well as the community, and the spiritual dimension in a direct and profound manner. In many ways, it is often because of the **lack of attention, cultivation and integration within the human dimension, that Provinces and Dioceses experience so much frustration, difficulty, stress, headache and heartache with many of its members.**

It is most helpful, as in initial formation, for a Province or Diocese to have a **detailed articulation of ongoing and continuous human formation** for its vowed/professed members.

Since this roadmap cannot start at the beginning with the background and support of the experiences of initial formation as detailed previously, there is often much catch-up to be extended to the membership. Unfolding ongoing formation on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, rather than on a one-time-event basis like the annual retreat, is the approach of *Formation Consultation Services*.

Ongoing human formation needs to be a mindful and intentional daily process. In this way, it will have significant impact and influence within the heart and life of a vowed/professed sister, brother, priest. In this manner, continuous formation possesses an integrative, conversational and transformational accent. Formation calls for **individual and corporate follow-up and follow-through** in order to facilitate practice and integration. This leads to structured accountability. Accountability unfolds within the Province or Diocese as members assume responsibility for their ongoing formation.

Structured Autobiography

Conducted within a self-help style format, a community(ies) or members from different communities gather over an extended period of time to dwell with the material within the Structured Autobiography. They share parts of their life story with each other. Through this process participants gather-up a fuller awareness of who they are; who have been the significant people, events, situations and things throughout their lives that have shaped and formed them into the people they are today, in both helpful and unhelpful ways. Through this process they will gather-up an enhanced appreciation of their preciousness and giftedness, as well as an understanding of their particular obstacles that hinder them from experiencing ease, joy, and peacefulness. From *FCS*'s perspective, the **Structured Autobiography is the foundational process of initial and ongoing formation**. It is the grounding out of which self-awareness grows and matures.

Formation for Local Community Leader, Superior, Facilitator, Guardian, etc

Most sisters, brothers and priests appointed to assume a leadership role as a local superior have little preparation. Within a small group format four to five people come together for an intensive individual and group experience. During a two-week process local leaders learn to guide, handle, and manage a wide variety of human situations that can arise within a local community situation. They learn *how* to take-up their task as local community leaders with peace-of-mind, balanced responsibility, and confidence. Individual follow-up supervision via telephone continues on a monthly and/or as needed basis to assist with deepening the growth and the extraction of the learnings from their ongoing experience as local community leaders. This process contains segments of *Reflective Living* and *Reflective Leadership*.

If the Province or Diocese prefers, *FCS* will work along with an individual designated by the Province to provide the formation of the above to local community leaders.

Reflective Leadership

This is formation for Province leadership. We recommend that a **Provincial**, before assuming office, or as soon as possible, participate in an intensive one-on-one process, a two-week or preferably a three-week process. The *Reflective Leadership* Process also includes selected and condensed sections of the Structured Autobiography and *Reflective Living* processes.

Reflective Leadership Unfolding within the Province

In turn, this process is also recommended for new **Provincial teams**, and any **Province-wide committee** that will require team cohesion. This is a team building and enhancement process. The process unfolds over a two-week period through individual and group processes. Within this process there is an accent on raising to consciousness one's particular self-interest-ego strivings, i.e. the part of the human dimension that tends to obstruct the self and thus the work of a team. Usually, it is the human element that obstructs the work of members on a team, and not their creative ideas.

Reflective Living

FCS's Reflective Living process is its most innovative and helpful process for initial and ongoing formation. Ideally, it builds upon the previous process of the Structured Autobiography, [and for those in initial formation, upon the Family-of-Origin; Being a Girl (Boy), Becoming a Woman (Man); and the Impact of Culture].

Reflective Living assists the individual to **tune into listening to experience** by being conscious and present in the moment. This process involves internal slowing down and paying attention, the opposite of taking for granted or distracting the self. Experience, being tuned into one's experience, includes being awake and aware, observing and reflecting back upon one's experiences as they unfold, i.e. what is happening and transpiring, both internally and externally at that particular moment.

In some manner and on some level when interacting with self, people, God, events, things and/or situations, these experiential interactions result in an experience. The experience, the interaction overflows **with feelings, emotions, sensations, perceptions, thoughts, desires, sentiment, impressions, sensitivities, sensibilities, opinions, concerns, daydreams**, etc.

In turn, **they influence and animate behavior**. Without wide-eyed open awareness in the here and now, a person tends to be on automatic and unconscious i.e. living out the unhelpful, unhealthy and life-eroding behaviors and ways of being-in-the-world. These unhelpful ways were usually learned years ago within the family and for some during initial formation as well.

Through *Reflective Living* we learn to **revere ordinary everyday experiences as our sacred text**. By dwelling with and reflecting upon our sacred text, this process reveals how we proceed with life, i.e. interacting, responding, or reacting to self, people, events, things, and situations encountered throughout the day. Through *Reflective Living* we learn to make explicit

what remains implicitly embedded within the experiences of daily life, in the experience of the moment. This unfolds in taking-up the tasks and in making choices that unfold in ease, joy and peacefulness no matter the situations in which people find themselves.

Rediscovering the Sabbath

Rediscovering the Sabbath is an individualized in-depth sabbatical program that may unfold over a month, two months and beyond. The individualized process is designed to meet an individual's unique ongoing formation needs. The average stay is 10-12 weeks. The Sabbath process is based upon helping participants to experience and articulate their foundational stories.

They are invited to slow down, pause, ponder and reclaim the unique truths of their *sacred life text*. They are invited to *come home* to who they truly are. In becoming grounded in their story, they are encouraged to make more explicit what moves their heart, what opens and constricts their heart. In understanding their story, participants discover what really matters to them and uncover the obstacles that are preventing them from growing into ordinary intimacy and deepening their spiritual life. This is all part of absorbing and integrating the art of *Reflective Living*.

Designing Formation for Specialized Situations within a Province

On occasion, a Province may have a particular need that calls for an outside resource familiar with the intimacies and complexities of religious life. *FCS* may be that experienced in-depth resource that you may be seeking.

Telephone Consultation, Follow-up and Follow-through

All our programming encourages follow-up and follow-through. For *FCS*'s part, this is accomplished usually through telephone consultation. This facilitates and supports the participant with practicing new ways, with human dimension integration, and with living daily life more consciously, and thus peacefully.