

# **Report from the North American Provinces**

## **Mission:**

## **Challenges for the future and consequences for formation A preliminary plan for our Province/Vicariate/Region**

### ***1. Challenges for our Context.***

- **Needs of the Church**

The current focus in North America seems to center principally on the scandal and the need for reconciliation and healing. There are many people hurt and alienated from the church. Among active Catholics there is much ignorance and religious illiteracy. There is a need for re-evangelization, and the new evangelization. There are many cultures and religious experiences, richness in diversity but sometime a fear of differences. Some ethnic communities are segregated, and communities remain divided and separate. There are many different faiths in the neighborhood and openness to dialogue is important. Inner city churches struggle a great deal and many churches are closing. Some churches in the suburbs are bursting at the seams. There were nearly 300,000 new Catholics in the United States this past year and the parishes offer increasing greater services. With bigger and bigger parishes there is loss of a sense of community. The second largest religious denomination in the United States is inactive Catholics. There are fewer priests and more work. The laity needs to take greater responsibility for the work of the church. There is a need to foster collaboration with laity and develop lay ministries. Some times there is a sense of minimalism among the laity and the clergy. There is growing sense of clericalism among some of the younger clergy, and a sense of isolation and individualism among some clergy. There is need for better formation directors and mentors in diocesan and religious seminaries. There are too few youth ministers and religious educators and a need of the church to encourage ministry among the youth and to serve the youth in a climate of immediate gratification. There is increasing parochialism; there is a focus solely on the local needs in parishes large and small.

- **Needs of the wider society.**

The need to overcome values of individualism, self reliance, self fulfillment and autonomy, the need to overcome attitudes of militarism and the growing reliance on power and violence as a means of control, The need to find non-violent ways of solving difficulties, The challenges of dealing with corporations who exploit workers and the environment by moving to other countries to find to cheaper labor and less restrictive laws, The need for a better justice system and social advocacy for the poor and those in overcrowded jails, The need to find more wholesome recreation in an entertainment culture that increasingly uses violence as entertainment, The need for advocacy for better education systems in a society with a high rate of illiteracy, The need to confront prejudice and a sense of religious superiority, The need to respond to a hunger for spirituality in a culture where production and possession serve as measures of worth, and excess

and access are sources of power, a need for promoting alternatives in a society consumed by resorting to legal remedies, A need for greater advocacy in a country where welfare reform eliminates services to the poor; Responding to the needs of single parents with children, we have a need to reform our health care system and access to prescription drugs. Standing in solidarity and advocacy with immigrants and those who suffer racism and racial profiling, promoting social responsibility in a climate of NIMBY (Not-in-my-back-yard), a need for more awareness of and a more just response to the illegal drug industry, the need to focus on the betterment of our own preaching in a climate of TV preachers who focus on health, wealth and contentment, a need to defend life in a culture of death.

- **Qualities of our candidates as they come to us**

Younger candidates come to us with idealism, religious ignorance and spiritual naiveté, and some candidates come to us with greater education and even degrees in theology. Older candidates come with greater resources and have the challenge of letting go of more. There is a spirit of indecisiveness about life in some candidates. Some are looking to be taken care of, looking for a safe environment. Some come with a desire for social justice. Younger candidates have the challenge of appropriating a variety of religious practices of the past. Some come with a need for stability and tradition and some are inflexible. There are a variety of cultural realities that come with each candidate. Some have spiritual and devotional motives, but are sometimes rigid and unbalanced. Many candidates come to us with prior life experience and ministry experience. Candidates come from wholesome family environments and some come from unstable and challenging contexts.

## ***II. Resources from our Patrimony/Heritage C.P.P.S.***

- **What things have I learned in this Formators course which will reorient our formation program?**

There seems to be focus on the humanness of Christ and the experience of the paschal mystery. There needs to be a focus on the Scripture studies and the sources of our community. We are a world wide community and we need to have a more global perspective in formation. There was greater detail on the Rule, and there is an importance to focus on greater opportunities to discuss and access the Normative and Formative texts. The Formators course has provided many ideas for topics in formation and for on-going formation of members. The formation program can provide a venue to discuss the difference between devotion and spirituality and promote a theology and ecclesiology of Precious Blood Spirituality. There is a greater appreciation of devotion and spirituality and a need to share the history in greater detail with our formation programs. The role of Mary in our Spirituality is an important discovery and will receive attention in Formation. A wealth of history has been opened up for us. Even the stories of the difficulties were encouraging and the importance of the bond of charity was emphasized. The concept of the mission house has greater detail to inform our future discussion about our houses and our mission.

- **What elements in the Profile of the CPPS Missionary will need special emphasis?**

There are many ways where we need to focus on how we live community life. It needs a lot of work. Shared meals and prayer happen occasionally. Some places are very good. Other places leave a great deal to be desired. We have a good sense of mission. There are more than 100 places where we can point out how our members do the “mission” portion of the profile in many excellent ways. But many do it as lone rangers. How do we support one another as community? This is where we need to place our emphasis. There needs to be greater understanding of how we understand and live the bond of charity.

We support the exchange of candidates and members in the international community.

Focusing on the “mission” portion, we also need to focus on what it means to be ministers of the Word, to allow God’s word to transform the patterns of human living.

- **What elements in our spirituality of the Blood of Christ will need special emphasis?**

The call of the covenant appeals to us, how we live the covenant with God and with each other. In many ways the covenant calls us to relationship and in our culture we experience broken relationships and the loss of relationships. Change of heart and mind in responding to the call of the blood calls for a change in ourselves and in the way we live. Most of us would not call our response to the call of the blood, “radical.” Our charism is “reconciliation,” and it is a place where we need greater skill and practice. We need to experience Reconciliation first so we can practice it.

We have a rich patrimony. We need to articulate “Gasparian Charism” with greater precision for a North American context. The renewal of person, culture, society and especially the Church, appeals to us. In light of recent scandals we need to be especially clear how we intend to love in a celibate way. Appreciation of devotion and promotion of our spirituality is what we are called to.

### ***III. Concrete Elements of a plan for Formators***

- **How do elements from I & II translate into new features in our Plan for Formation?**

1. Combine the retreats for the candidates from all four provinces. Each day of the three day retreat would focus on one of the three pillars.
2. Develop a way to use the Inter-provincial Formation policies and the Profile for regular conversation and conferences at the various levels of formation.
3. Develop a way for the candidates to reflect on and share the Word of God in Eucharist and prayer settings in our houses of formation.

4. We shall examine the ways we share substantial conversation during meal times and recreation. We shall examine how the bond of charity is lived in the House of formation, learning to model “sincerity of heart, constant concern for justice, fidelity to one’s word, and courtesy of manner.” (C29)
5. We shall review and renew our policies on ministry opportunities for our candidates.
6. We shall review and renew our policies on Cross-Culture experiences, and the need for candidates to learn other languages. We shall insist that this experience is constitutive to our formation programs, and we will explore and develop opportunities and programs for an effective use of this experience. We would prefer that this cross-cultural experience be in a CPPS context.
7. A commitment toward ensuring that the houses of formation consists of candidates and members living together in intentional community formed in Precious Blood Spirituality and the Bond of Charity.
8. A Commitment to more Inter-provincial collaborative efforts in Vocations and at the various levels of formation.
9. A commitment to re-read and recommit ourselves to our Inter-provincial policies of Formation.
10. We will create a process for discussion and greater awareness of our Normative Texts in our houses of formation and for on-going formation of members.