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Ongoing Formation as Creative Fidelity

by Alfredo Becerra Vázquez, C.M.

Editor of Nuntia and Vincentiana

1. Introduction

Ongoing formation¹ and fidelity to the Vincentian charism make up “the pillars” of the spiritual and apostolic renewal of the Congregation.

Our Constitutions speak to this regard: “... In addition, members should afford spiritual assistance to priests both in the work of their ongoing formation and in promoting their pastoral zeal. They should work to encourage in them the desire of fulfilling the Church’s option for the poor” (C 15); “The formation of our members should be continued and renewed all through life” (C 81).

Ongoing formation helps us to know how to respond to the demands of our mission and the challenges of the present world. God uses us as apt and effective ministers in order to respond to the rapid and profound changes of our world that place upon us an obligation to reflect upon that reality and that of our own lives in order to see what things we ought to modify within ourselves and to modify our own concepts, attitudes, and methods. This critical approach will allow us to raise the level of our own vocation and see it as a gift from God. It does not deal only with theoretic, academic, or practical perfection in a way that might seem like intellectual or professional recycling, but rather as *something much more profound and extensive, because ongoing formation is based in the deepest recesses of our spirit and desires to adapt itself as much as possible and in every possible way to present circumstances and to anticipate, to the extent that it be possible, the future.* Ongoing formation implies a constant dedication and effort for spiritual, intellectual, practical, and professional renewal so that it permit us to understand and respond to the new

¹ In the documents of the Congregation and the Church, the expressions “ongoing formation” and “permanent formation” are used almost with the same significance. Others make a distinction which could be useful: they prefer to use the expression “ongoing formation” to refer to formation as a incessant and progressive process of personal and apostolic integration, and “permanent formation” when one speaks of intensive formation periods that take place occasionally in life and outside one’s own community, as would be sabbatical time, recycling, courses, workshops, and the participation in various meetings.

realities of the ever-changing world, and transmit the word of God to men and women of our time; it deals with a ongoing process of “continual conversion” that is most coherent with our Vincentian identity.

2. Ongoing formation as a requirement of our creative fidelity

From the time of Vatican Council II we have received the call for new ways of priestly and religious formation. The concept of formation in general and the notion of ongoing formation have evolved according to the various formational experiences that the very same Council had begun.² This evolution and understanding of formation have been reflected in the Congregation, for example in the documents concerning initial formation.

The letter of the 1992 General Assembly that was directed to the confreres affirms the following: “Community renewal itself requires an integral formation, initial and ongoing, of its members. The principle of this formation is: ‘Following Christ, the evangelizer of the poor.’ Therefore: we commit ourselves to an energetic program of integral formation in which each confrere will be responsible and accountable for his own formation for the mission; we also commit ourselves to preparing with care true animators of Vincentian communities.”³

Formation never ends and takes into account all dimensions and stages of the person, and gives priority to life in the Spirit as an aspect that structures and gives meaning to others.⁴ In the “Little

² Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis* (PC), 18 and *Optatam Totius* (OT), 22. The concept of education and formation in the civil area has evolved from a scholastic and professional model, which reduced education or formation predominantly to the professional and technical field and which would be realized once in a lifetime, to another model that considers all aspects of the person and his/her overall development. In the ecclesial area, we have passed from a formation concept, which also insisted fundamentally on the academic and which was given in the first years of the seminary or religious life, to a formation model centered on the whole person and which is developed throughout one’s entire life; cf. PC, 18. Since Vatican II, the various documents on formation for the priesthood, religious and consecrated life insist on and develop the integral, global, and ongoing concept of formation.

³ 38th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission (Rome, July 1992), *Letter to the Confreres*, New Communities, No. 4, in *Vincentiana* 4-5 (July-October 1992), 367.

⁴ This formation concept is clearly expressed in the various documents of the Church on formation to the consecrated life; cf. *Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life As Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, 46; OT, 22; *Basic Norms for the Formation of Priests*, 100; *Vita Consecrata* (VC), 65.

Company” we find two distinct phases: initial formation and permanent or ongoing formation. This is not a remedial measure due to problems in initial formation, neither is it its complement, perfection or adaptation. On the contrary, *primary formation ought to be ordered toward ongoing formation*,⁵ as a preparation for a life of ongoing formation, albeit, the former possesses a relative autonomy and its own requirements since it is a stage of testing and a period of initiation into religious life. Initial formation is the first stage of a life of ongoing formation, and ought to create the taste for, the intellectual curiosity toward, and the acquisition of the attitudes and skills that might favor apostolic discernment, qualification and constant adaptation to the continuous changes, and growth implied by them.

Human life is by its very nature continuous and changing and, when these elements are harmonized, they guarantee maturity and development of the person. Ongoing formation enables persons to live change in continuity and continuity amidst changes. This vital dynamic is expressed by the word “fidelity” that implies a constant adherence to perennial values and their appropriation and incarnation in the diverse circumstances and stages of life. On this account one grows and matures, human life is built up, as a process of qualitative growth, as a perfection that supposes inventiveness and creativity.⁶ Ongoing formation, understood in this way, helps integrate creativity with fidelity, especially since our vocation requires dynamic growth and a faithful response to the Lord’s calls discerned in the signs of the times. *The quality of our apostolic service depends on this*. It refers to a faithfulness and dynamic that must *reproduce with courage, the creativity and the sanctity of the founders and foundresses as a response to the signs of the times that arise in today’s world*, to carry out what St. Vincent would do today, in faithfulness to the Spirit in order to respond to the apostolic demands of our time.

3. The basis and the integral aspects of ongoing formation

a) *The basis of ongoing formation*

The need for ongoing formation is a requirement of the religious and apostolic vocation itself; we need to revive continually the gift we have received, to maintain it always alive and keep fresh the

⁵ In the Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), the Pope affirms that ongoing formation is the natural and necessary continuation of the process of building the personality which began in initial formation... ongoing formation is prepared for by initial formation, which motivates and assures the conditions for its realization cf. 71.

⁶ The Pope speaks of creative and dynamic fidelity in VC, 37.

permanent newness of God's gift.⁷ The following of Christ implies a dynamism that needs to be nourished and renewed constantly and his call to follow him is repeated in each moment. This asks of us a constant effort in order to clothe ourselves progressively in his dispositions toward the Father, albeit since we are sinners we can never expect to achieve fully the gestation of that new man that we experience within ourselves, nor to possess in all the circumstances of our lives the sentiments of Christ.⁸ From this perspective, ongoing formation implies living in a continuous process of conversion and spiritual renewal.

On the other hand, our mission is a living grace that we receive and live in unrecorded moments; we have to preserve it, deepen it, and appropriate it constantly in harmony with the Church. This requires of us a continual spiritual and apostolic renewal. We will not have anything to offer the poor, society and to dialogue with others if we are not imbued with fidelity to the Vincentian charism, not for the purpose of mechanical repetition, but rather in order to recreate it in the here and now, for the service of the poor, the Church and the world.

b) Aspects of ongoing formation

What areas or aspects ought to be covered and undertaken by ongoing formation? Ongoing formation is global in scope: Formation "should involve the whole person..., so that... every attitude and action, at important moments as well as in the ordinary events of life, will show that they belong completely and joyfully to God.... For formation to be complete, it must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects."⁹ Reducing ongoing formation only to the intellectual dimension by a type of recycling, sabbatical years, courses and participation in diverse meetings, is to return to a concept of formation already surpassed, as has been mentioned previously. Intellectual renewal is formative in the measure in which we also mature and grow in personal integration as persons and as Vincentian missionaries, and we go on to integrate into the body of the Congregation, in a progressive manner.

Given that the subject of ongoing formation is the person with all his dimensions in each stage of life, the end or the *terminus of*

⁷ Cf. 2 Tm 1:6; *Potissimum Institutioni* (PI), 67; PDV, 7.

⁸ Cf. VC, 65 and 69. With regard to priest, the Pope affirms that *the proper foundation and original motivation for ongoing formation is contained in the dynamism of the sacrament of holy orders* (PDV, 70).

⁹ VC, 65.

formation is the totality of the human person, and includes five fundamental aspects:¹⁰

- a) Life in the Spirit holds the primacy, in which apostolic discernment occupies an essential place. Vincent would say to be “interior men.” *Ongoing formation* is achieved principally through the constant evaluation and reflection on one’s own apostolate seen by the light of faith and with the help of the apostolic community. Thus, ongoing formation is situated within a context of mission and presents it as an integral, essential dimension of our apostolic and missionary life that ought to be evaluated and discerned through the Word of God and the contemplation of the world, in a prayerful dialogue with the Lord. This is part of a process of continuous discernment. If the discernment takes place in common, it is much better.
- b) The human and fraternal dimension supposes a constant effort in order to grow in our personal and communal maturity and integration. It is indispensable to continue growing in self-knowledge and in the capacity to reveal ourselves and to let ourselves be known, by self-esteem, in empathy and sympathy with those with whom we live and share the mission. Special attention should be given to understanding the deepest desires and the growth in the capacity of self-disclosure and thus to openness to the grace to identify oneself ever more with the sentiments of Christ. Hence communal and apostolic solidarity will grow, as well as the sense of belonging to the Congregation.
- c) The third aspect is the apostolic and missionary dimension that, in practice, requires updating in the apostolic and missionary objectives and methods, in faithfulness to our charism, our mission and the proper style of the Vincentian missionary.
- d) The intellectual dimension, based upon a solid theological formation needed for personal and apostolic discernment, asks of us a continual updating in the various ministries and works in which are concretized the actual mission of the Congregation and the concrete mission that each one has received.
- e) The last dimension is that of our Vincentian charism. This requires study, reflection, and internalization of all the riches of the Vincentian heritage that we possess. It presupposes that we have the know-how to make a synthesis in our life, to apply

¹⁰ Cf. VC, 71. Pope John Paul II in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, in proposing these five dimensions of ongoing formation, continues and concretizes the orientations already contained in some Church documents on the formation of religious, especially in *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (PI) and *Fraternal Life in Community* (VFC).

Vincentian spirituality and teaching to our daily lives as sons of St. Vincent, to renew constantly our baptismal “consecration” as expressed in the living out of our vows, particularly that of “stability.” This requires a deepening of the lived Vincentian charism through inculturation, as an integral and essential element of our ongoing formation. We are Vincentians with our feet planted firmly in a context in which “we concretize” the Vincentian charism.

4. Applications and those responsible for ongoing formation

a) *The community as the privileged place for ongoing formation*

A privileged place for ongoing formation is the apostolic community as expressed in some documents of the Church.¹¹ In it the Vincentian finds the necessary support and motivation. Apostolic works, the provinces, the Visitors’ Conferences also ought to initiate and offer subject matter for ongoing formation, since this is a requirement for all Vincentian missionaries as for the entire Congregation. Let us ask ourselves if our communities sincerely want to motivate and maintain ongoing formation. Is it not activism that identifies all kinds of activity and work with the apostolic mission, the lack of a sense of belonging, isolation, individualism and prevailing subjectivism in many of our communities with major obstacles for ongoing formation, which is not a merely individual and temporary activity?

We are community for the mission. Many times we have experienced fruitfulness as regards the mission, in the measure that we feel part of a living community, of a province with vision, of a Congregation that takes up the challenges that the new forms of poverty present. In these (community, province, and Congregation), her members find spaces for fraternal dialogue, for reflection and prayer. A community, a province and a Congregation in which, by way of personal and spiritual communication, the sense of co-responsibility for one another and mutual help in order to discover the way in which we ought to proceed grow.¹² Thus a community is converted in a place of formation par excellence through the deepening and appropriation of our charism and mission,¹³ where “... broad guidelines are implemented concretely,

¹¹ “Religious community is, for everyone, the place and the natural setting of the process of growth, where all become co-responsible for the growth of others” VFC, 43; cf. also VC, 67 and PI, 27.

¹² Cf. VFC, 43.

¹³ The Union of Superiors General, in its document for the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life, affirms that a new model of apostolic

through patient and persevering daily efforts... also... where, day by day, members help one another to respond as consecrated persons, bearing a common charism, to the needs of the least and to the challenges of the new society.”¹⁴

It is a requirement of our mission and an integral part of it to create an “apostolic community,” since the community is of itself missionary, announcement and proclamation of God by means of brotherly love and the witness of communion, and because through it the universal mission of the Congregation is concretized and its realization is made possible. We must convince ourselves that our mission and its apostolic priorities, as they were proposed in the last General Assembly and, little by little, as they are concretized on the provincial level, will be vain efforts if the local community does not translate them into a community plan. The plan is not limited to noting some minimal communal activities and the community’s schedule and calendar, but rather encourages a process of approbation of the values of being Vincentian, of communal missionary discernment and assuring space for ongoing formation.

b) *Those responsible for ongoing formation*

Through a number of General Assemblies, the Congregation of the Mission has manifested its concern for offering and assuring ongoing formation for the missionaries. It has promoted two organisms on the congregational level: the International Center for Formation in Paris¹⁵ and the International Secretariat of Vincentian Studies.¹⁶

At the provincial level the Visitor is responsible for ongoing formation; hence the affirmation of our Statutes: *“Individual provinces, through the help of their formation commission, should*

community is emerging, in which more emphasis is placed on interpersonal relations and that the “type of traditional community, based predominantly on regular observance and structure, is giving way to a deeper fraternal life.... The community’s missionary dimension has been rediscovered... with a new style of spiritual animation and authority and with more responsibility, that favors a new spirituality and a new apostolic sense.” *Charisms in the Church for the World*, Document Final, 2.2.

¹⁴ VFC, 43.

¹⁵ To learn about the beginning of the program, cf. JOHN RYBOLT, “International Formation Center: Saint Vincent de Paul,” in *Vincentiana* 4-5 (July-October 1996), 390-396; its statutes and program, cf. “International Formation Center: St. Vincent de Paul (CIF),” in *Vincentiana* 2 (March-April 2000), 144-147; an activity report, cf. JOHN RYBOLT, “Report on the International Formation Center: Saint Vincent de Paul (CIF),” in *Vincentiana* 3 (May-June 2002), 226-231.

¹⁶ Cf. “International Secretariat of Vincentian Studies (S.I.E.V.),” in *Vincentiana* 2 (March-April 2000), 139-141.

organize and promote both common and personal continuing formation” (S 42).

The local superior is responsible for promoting ongoing formation in the community and among the individual members, especially through the example of his dedication to his own formation.¹⁷ He needs to promote the drafting, execution and evaluation of the community plan, which needs to include ongoing formation as an essential element.

One must also take into account that prior to the role of the superior, the individual Vincentian missionary is responsible for his own ongoing formation and that a community plan or a program of the provincial commission is useless if the individual himself is not convinced of the need for it.¹⁸ The future of many ministries will depend, possibly, not so much on the number of missionaries, but rather on the level of expertise and the apostolic vision to confront the challenges of a changing culture and on the participation of the Vincentian laity in our works, services, and apostolates. It will be necessary that each Vincentian missionary, in his personal life plan, define his priorities, among which ongoing formation must hold a important place.

The Superior General and his council also play a decisive role, since they are responsible for applying the conclusions, commitments and decisions, which the General Assembly makes about ongoing formation.¹⁹ In this way when canonical visitations take place, they

¹⁷ The Constitutions say that *“Each community should work at developing a community plan, according to the Constitutions, Statutes, and the provincial norms”* (C 27). This plan will keep present the ordering of our life and work, the holding of council meetings, and the periodic evaluation of our life and activity. This constitutional arrangement is complemented by the Statute which says: *“The community plan, which each community draws up for itself as far as possible at the beginning of its work year, should include all of the following: apostolic activity, prayer, the use of goods, Christian witness where we work, ongoing formation, times for groups reflection, necessary time for relaxation and study, and an order of day. All these should be revised periodically”* (S 16).

¹⁸ *“In a certain sense, it is the priest himself, the individual priest, who is the person primarily responsible in the Church for ongoing formation. Truly each priest has the duty, rooted in the sacrament of holy orders, to be faithful to the gift God has given him and to respond to the call for daily conversion which comes with the gift itself. The regulations and norms established by Church authority, as also the example given by other priests, are not enough to make permanent formation attractive unless the individual priest is personally convinced of its need and is determined to make use of the opportunities, times and forms in which it comes”* (PDV, 79).

¹⁹ Cf. ROBERT P. MALONEY, *Letter to the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission* (12 June 1999), in *Vincentiana* 6 (November-December 1999), 391-393.

ought to ask each missionary how does ongoing formation take place, and verify that the community and the province supports and favors it.

It may prove beneficial that, at the level of the Visitors' Conferences, one person or a commission be delegated for matters concerning ongoing formation. There exist organisms in the Congregation that can promote, more decidedly, ongoing formation in the various continents,²⁰ regions or countries.²¹ Without a doubt in the various provinces there exists a strong commitment that favors missionary formation of its members, but perhaps it may be necessary to encourage more interprovincial collaboration in this area.

5. Resources and stages of ongoing formation

a) *Resources for Ongoing Formation*

Ongoing formation implies an effort to maximize coherence with the demands of our present mission that will permit us to do better than which we already do and to be more creative and bold apostolically. For this, the suitable means of our way of proceeding are the most adequate for living in creative fidelity.²²

Ongoing formation also implies an assiduous dedication to reading and to the deepening of our Vincentian charism and to pastoral-theological and biblical reflection. This requires setting aside

²⁰ Asian-Pacific Conference of Visitors (APVC); European Conference of Visitors of the Mission (CEVIM); Latin American Conference of Vincentian Provinces (CLAPVI); Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar (COVIAM) and the National Conference of Visitors of the United States (NCV).

²¹ Commission of Vincentian Studies of Colombia (CEVCO); Vincentian Animation Center (CAVI) in Peru; Vincentian Animation and Missionary Center (CAVIM) in Chile; Vincentian Studies Institute (VSI) in the United States; Central European Vincentian Studies Group (MEGVIS); Vincentian Animation Group (GAV) in Italy; Vincentian Studies Week in Salamanca (Spain); Research and Vincentian Animation Group (GRAV) in France; International Secretariat of Vincentian Studies (SIEV), International Formation Center (CIF) in Paris. We recommend the article of EMERIC AMYOT D'INVILLE, "The Structure of Vincentian Studies and Animation," in *Vincentiana* 2 (March-April 2000), 128-138.

²² We could say that among the simple and accessible means for our creative fidelity we have: the daily Eucharist, personal and community prayer, the sacrament of reconciliation, spiritual direction, monthly retreats, study meetings, the apostolate, the mission, etc. All these impel us toward a growing creativity in fidelity, and should have a privileged place in the personal and community plan. We ask ourselves if, really, we use, as we should, these simple and ordinary means of ongoing formation proper to our community life and what we must do to make better use of them.

time for qualification and professional and intellectual “aggiornamento.” Personal study and shared reflection in community ought to be the integrating factor of our life as Vincentian missionaries. At the time of a ministerial change, it is desirable that updating occur in preparation for the newly assigned ministry. This is a proper time for renewal and acquisition of skills. It is an investment that gives returns in a better service of the poor. In this respect, the *Practical Guide for the Visitor* says: “Without in any way trying to lesson creativity in the task of ongoing formation, a number of possibilities are cited here: professional courses, organized formation days for the province, study weeks at different levels, the preparation of a provincial library to facilitate pastoral and Vincentian studies, acquiring magazines and promoting their reading, and in general, to have available for all the members of the province all the means necessary for their ongoing formation.”²³

There are, without a doubt, diverse activities, events and programs in ongoing formation on the provincial, regional, and congregational levels that constitute very adequate means for ongoing formation. If, in truth, we desire to offer “skilled” service to the poor, then we need to invest in ongoing formation.

b) Stages in ongoing formation

Formation refers to a life-long process that takes into account the various “life cycles” by means of which a person continues to grow and work. “*There is a youthfulness of spirit which lasts through time; it arises from the fact that at every stage of life a person seeks and finds a new task to fulfil, a particular way of being, of serving and of loving.*”²⁴ Ongoing formation ought to take into consideration these stages along with the opportunities and challenges they present and adapt itself to them.²⁵

²³ GENERAL CURIA, *A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, Rome 1998, no. 106.

²⁴ VC, 70.

²⁵ The Pope distinguishes the following phases or life cycles: 1) the first years of full insertion in apostolic activity; 2) the successive phase, which can present the risk of tiredness, routine and the frustration of arriving at few results; 3) the mature age, with the danger of individualism, inflexibility, self-centeredness and the fear of not being in line with the times; 4) advanced age, characterized by the decline in physical and mental strength and the gradual withdrawal from activity; and 5) the moment of uniting oneself with the supreme hour of the Lord’s passion. The Pope also speaks of moments of crisis, when fidelity is more difficulty, and affirms the need for a superior and the qualified help of a brother. These moments of trial “*will appear as a providential means of being formed by the Father’s hands, and as a struggle which is not only psychological, carried out by the ‘I’ in relation to itself and its weaknesses, but also religious, touched each day by the presence of God and the power of the Cross!*” cf. VC 70.

The period that makes up the first years after ordination or initial formation, more or less, is dealt with in various provinces.

In the period called “the age of maturity” that tends to include the time between 45 and 65 years of age, it is possible that, together with personal growth, there is a strong tendency toward individualism, accompanied by occasional fears of not being in line with the times and the feeling of a certain routine, tiredness and frustration for not having achieved the goals imagined during youth. For that reason, ongoing formation must focus on a deeper spiritual experience that permits recovering one’s personal history in God’s light and seeing the present as a moment of grace, with the hope that, in later years, all will be possible with the strength that comes from God. It is also most probable that lived community and apostolic struggles will awaken the need for a greater deepening and acquiring of the values of our way of life for a “second conversion” and a new apostolic impetus, together with the purification of certain aspects of the personality, and thus enable one to offer oneself to God more genuinely and with greater generosity.²⁶ It is an appropriate time to interrupt one’s work and take a sabbatical that includes academic and pastoral updating, as a preparation for a concrete assignment in the years ahead. When the time of retirement draws near, another period of human and spiritual formation are called for in order to assume with joy and greater meaning this time of declining activity. Some new apostolic experiences can also help to identify a ministry that is amenable to this age.

The care of the elderly and infirm confreres holds a relevant part in the life of the Congregation. Besides the affection and gratitude that we feel and express for our brothers who have spent themselves in the service of the Lord in the person of the poor, and in the Congregation in the Church, we say to them too that the evening and night of life have a mission and for that reason it is necessary to live this stage in a state of ongoing formation. These confreres are a blessing for our houses and Provinces.²⁷ It is desirable that elderly Vincentian missionaries remain in an apostolic community while they require no extraordinary help, and that they have a work adequate to their personal situation, in order to experience in this stage of life what the psalmist says, speaking of the just man

²⁶ Cf. VC, 70.

²⁷ “*Sick, infirm, and aging confreres should have a special place in our hearts, since their presence is a blessing on our houses. Consequently, besides medical care and personal attention, we should provide for them the means to share in our daily lives and in our apostolate*” (C 26, § 1).

and comparing him with a cedar of Lebanon: *“They shall bear fruit even in old age, always vigorous and sturdy, as they proclaim: ‘The Lord is just....’”*²⁸

6. Conclusion

This reflection concludes with a synthesis that gathers together the most practical aspects for carrying out ongoing formation. All ought to assume responsibility for it with sincerity and generosity, since the quality of our apostolate, the existence of many of our apostolic works and the future of our service to the Church depend in great measure on our ongoing formation. Each Vincentian missionary ought to ask himself in what ways he is using his God-given talents and how he is preparing myself to be an apt instrument in God’s hands. The response ought to be clearly expressed in his personal plan of life that he has to discern with his local superior. In the same way, each community has to draft a plan that includes ongoing formation as an essential component, approved by the provincial. One ought to use better the means offered by our Congregation, such as, spiritual direction, sacramental life and prayer, communal apostolic discernment supported by a constant renewal and by means of apostolic and pastoral training through assiduous study and personal reflection, sabbatical times that are well prepared and organized, and participation in various meetings on the provincial, regional and congregational levels. These meetings ought always to include elements of study and reflection about some theme that prepares for a better and fuller apostolic commitment.

Initial formation of our own members has to prepare the Vincentian missionary in order to live always the dynamic of formation. It is necessary to guarantee an integral, ongoing formation in creative fidelity to the mission that God has confided to the “little” Company.²⁹

(GREGORY J. SEMENIUK, C.M., translator)

²⁸ Psalm 92:15-16. In the “third age” it is still possible to organize some meetings of spiritual support adapted to the rhythm of human and apostolic life, which could help the elderly and infirm remain active in the measure of their strength and support them in their difficulties and accompany them so as not to fall into the temptation of lack of interest, apathy and isolation.

²⁹ We are invited to renew ongoing formation in the Congregation. We have begun a small survey to understand our reality in this respect. When the time comes, we will let you know the results, and it will stimulate us to renew it.