



Manila November 2000

Formation Throughout Life

Formation conceived as integral growth requires that at every stage of their lives sisters have sufficient opportunity for continuing their formation. Const. 111

Reflection throughout life on God's final call helps us to see each stage of our life as a time of coming closer to God who has called us from the beginning. Dir. 57

Allowing oneself to be formed in the image of God and to live the Gospel message in the Spirit of the Congregation is seen as a life-long process. Opportunities to continue this formation in spiritual, vocational, doctrinal and professional ways suited to the personal and apostolic needs of each sister are encouraged throughout the Congregation.

Formation also includes preparation for retirement from active ministry because of age or ill health and for entry into a new phase on life's journey, living in ever closer communion with Christ as we journey homeward.

Communities

It is the spirit that gives life ... The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Jn 6:36

To keep the Spirit of the RNDM charism alive it is essential to involve the community members in on-going reflection on our consecrated life for Mission, Charism and Spirituality. We recognize and value the wisdom and experience of our elder sisters. In the breaking and sharing of the bread and on our journey we experience that together we are in search of God.

When a Sister returns from international missioning the community to which she is missioned needs to be supportive, aware of and open to her experience and her re-entry process.

Throughout the congregation communities are challenged to search for creative ways of living the Charism in today's world and deepening the contemplative spirit, thus being places of welcome for new members both from their own culture and those missioned from other provinces/regions.

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Introduction

*Jesus himself walked by their side ...
Sharing the Word of God...
And they recognized him in the breaking of the bread*
Luke 24: 13-35

As a group of RNDMs we gathered in Manila November 1-28 2000, from across the Congregation. We were accompanied by Renee Stevens in this process of reflection and discernment on RNDM formation. As our facilitator, she guided us with respect and efficiency, and this we appreciated.

We now offer to the Congregation a document which is clear, simple and centred on the essentials of our missionary calling, our gift from God.

Faithful to Euphrasie Barbier's fundamental vision we see our life and mission deeply rooted in the unfolding movement of the life and love of God, Trinity.

On our journey, we are not alone. As with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus walks with us, he calls us to seek a genuine incarnation in the countries and among the human groups, where we are sent, breaking with them the bread of life, attentive to their joys and sorrows, their struggles and their hopes, respecting their culture and traditions, their beliefs and faith.

Accompanied at each stage of their journey, the women called to participate with us in the universal mission of the church are invited to enter more and more deeply into our missionary spirituality, nourished at the wellspring of contemplation and lived in communion with one another.

Relationship between Leaders and Formators

To live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ who is the head by whom the whole body is joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function.
Eph 4: 15-16

The relationship between leaders and formators is the vital key in enabling our communion with one another to reach its full potential. Taking the steps necessary to foster and develop this relationship requires us to be patient and respectful as we move towards truly being companions to one another on the RNDM journey.

The nurturing of this relationship through on-going reflection and regular facilitation is essential. This will enable effective collaboration in the coordination of international missioning and overseas studies, in on-going animation of communities and in forward planning.

Formators

Qualities

Women who are open to transformation both psychologically and spiritually.

Women able to relate with others.

Women who have integrated the vision and mission of the Congregation in their lives.

Women who are educated, trained and prepared for their role.

Women of prayer and spiritual discernment

Women who are flexible.

Formation

Formation personnel are given the opportunity for sound preparation and on-going personal renewal including experience of mission beyond their own country and of the realities of the poor and marginalised. Dir 56

Formation for the formator is fundamental, this will include Studies in Scripture, Theology and Missiology. An International mission experience will be part of the preparation for the task.

To nourish herself and to live contemplatively each formator needs the support of professional and spiritual accompaniment, regular and frequent time for reflection, reading and leisure.

The formator's approach to contemplation, communion and mission is the most effective way of communicating these values to her to those she accompanies.

We invite such women to go beyond frontiers, with generosity and a willingness to risk as did Euphrasie Barbier and the first RNDMs who went to the other end of the earth.

This document is not only destined for the sisters in initial formation and for the formators but for all. It stresses the sense of responsibility of each RNDM, of each community in the concrete reality of each particular culture. It is an invitation to creativity in welcoming women of today in ways that are relevant to our time and to the people to whom they are sent.

No matter how inspirational a document is, if it is not written in our hearts, in the hearts of each member across the Congregation, it has no meaning, no power.

The Letter of Paul to the people of Corinth reminds us of the deeper truth:

You are yourselves our Letter, written in our hearts.

That anybody can see and read ...

You are a letter from Christ...

Written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Not on stone tablets

But on the tablets of your living heart.

2Cor. 3:2-3

Welcome to the Journey; A Reflection

**GOD IS HOLY. THE WORLD IS HOLY
WE ARE HOLY.**

As RNDM gospel women, our deepest longing
is to journey home to God.

It is not a journey we take alone; our longing is communal.

It is not a journey we walk for ourselves,
our longing is justice for all.

It is not a journey we inspired; our longing is God-Made.

Our longing is of God. Our journey is in God.

Our destination is God.

We are lived in by God, a God of surprise,
unrestrained creativity, and unimaginable love.

The life of Jesus

is God's response to our deepest longing for love,
and the path his life took to liberate humankind was

Euphrasie's inspiration, and indeed, it is our own;

to be sent in love, for love, by Love itself,

to be love for the whole of creation.

This is the Divine Mission

To this end we give our lives as RNDMs.

We witness, in our loving, sharing and deep listening
to a life of chastity, poverty and obedience,

as a sign to all that only in God

are our deepest longings fulfilled.

and there are other places also

Mark 1: 38 Matthew 28:19

International Missioning

Mission experience both local and international are essential parts of this period of the journey.

The letting go involved in such experience enables her to have a heart for the world, to go beyond the boundaries of the familiar, to know something of the vulnerability and the helplessness of the poor, and so know a new level of conversion.

The process of international missioning of the Temporary Professed Sister involves dialogue, discernment and good communication: the sister, the sending and receiving Province/Region and the CLT.

(the specific norms to be followed for this process are set out in the booklet on International Missioning.)

Prior to this sending some preparation is offered and after arrival there will be language and orientation opportunities provided according to local situations.

We see accompaniment and RNDM peer group presence as important in this phase of the journey.

Towards the end of this experience, time is taken for reflection and further discernment and decision making regarding her presence in mission.

to give one's all for the reign of God by joyful involvement in relational and social justice issues and in the integrity of creation

Process

In dialogue with each sister a plan is made at the local level, to cover the period of her Temporary Profession. This will include professional, scriptural, theological and missiological studies.

Human growth and development, prayer and spirituality, the vowed life, congregation, church, society, and current world realities, are also topics which will be studied in this period. Accompaniment and spiritual direction are seen as important for each woman.

The formation of the sister in Temporary Profession occurs in her place of mission, where the RNDM community is the primary base of support.

Sharing of responsibilities, finance, and leadership challenge the woman into new areas of growth and development.

The sister together with the formator regularly reflects on her life and allows it to be challenged in the light of the charism. Written reflections may be required on an annual basis, and they are required at times of renewal of Vows. Time is given for reflection, sharing and writing by the sister concerned and the one accompanying her. The input of the local community is considered to be an important dimension of this process.

So, one with our sister Euphrasie, and one with each other,
we live the grace of our baptismal longing
in contemplation, communion and mission
for the sake of justice.

The unfolding of this grace is enfolded in the deep quality
of our relationships –
right relationships with God, self, others, the earth,
and indeed, the entire cosmos:
relationships that speak of our communion
with all of creation beyond our fears,
to liberate our creative potential for mission.

Our relationships as RNDMs bear a particular flavor.

Made vibrant by our many cultures,
we cherish our gift of internationality
and in particular its powerful expression
in international missioning.

By this very diversity we point beyond ourselves
and all humanity
to the God in whom we are all ONE.
the one who is our deepest, shared longing.

So our vision is large and our mission is profound,
but so too, is our God!

On this journey home we welcome sister travelers
to “come and see”, to know “how good it is to be here,”
to be one with us,
to be sent on the journey together,
to places here and far beyond.

**GOD IS HOLY. THE WORLD IS HOLY. WE ARE
HOLY**

General Principles

Each RNDM is a formator, and each RNDM community is a place of welcome and we recognize the need for women who are trained and have had experience in international mission to accompany new members on their journey into our international missionary life.

We see adult to adult relationships as essential for maturation and growth into wholeness, and so relational justice, personal involvement in discernment and decision making are values to be honored in all phases of the journey.

For us formation is a process, a life long journey, along which there are specific points of reflection, discernment and further decision making which enable the woman to commit herself totally to God within the Congregation.

We recognize that this is a journey together, an Emmaus experience, where we share the joys and sorrows of sisters journeying together, and are formed and transformed by them.

It is an inward journey towards our true self discovered in contemplation. It calls us beyond the self to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.

To be sent ... Temporary Profession

Mark 3:14

The time of first commitment is a further time of formation and probation in preparation for the act of final profession. During it the sister continues her spiritual, doctrinal, academic and apostolic formation, learning progressively how to integrate in her life, contemplation, communion and apostolic activity.

Const 109 and Dir 53

Vision

Through a wholistic and integrated process, to accompany women as they grow into the fullness of their potential and enter resolutely into the international missionary life of the Congregation, in preparation for Final Profession.

Mission

to grow further into the likeness of Christ, and to seek and nurture God experience in self, others, creation and the cosmos

to continue one's own growth as an adult, drawing on one's inner resources, and the support of one's companions on the journey. Openness to new learning, self awareness and self critique are parts of this process

to further growth in understanding and commitment to the RNDM charism and mission in the spirit of Euphrasie Barbier

to experience mission in one's own country, and to have international mission experience before final commitment when it is possible. We recognize that mission is at the heart of our charism and that internationality is the gift for mission to acquire necessary academic and professional qualifications, theology, scripture and missiology

to nurture in the woman a deeper understanding of the RNDM mission through experience in the missionary activity of the Province/Region.

to learn what it is to live in a community of adult women from diverse cultures and/or countries who are united in their vision as RNDMs

Process

Introduction to and experience of a variety of ways of praying so that the woman discovers her unique way of encountering God. Silence and solitude are recognised as essentials in this process as are accompaniment and spiritual discernment.

Communal prayer, Community celebration of Reconciliation and Eucharist, the place of the Prayer of the Church, are all lived realities for her.

Studies in Scripture, Theology of the Vowed Life, Trinity and Charism, Rule and Constitutions, and Church and Congregational Documents, form part of the Novitiate phase.

This part of the journey will also include studies/courses in human maturation, relational and communication skills, finance and learning how to accept responsibility for and accountability to community.

Immersion into the missionary activity of the sisters allows her to touch and be touched by the lives of the poor, and spurs her on to commitment to the reign of God.

At the end of the Novitiate, the woman discerns together with the formator, her desire and readiness to move on into the next phase of her journey and makes her first profession of vows.

Phases of Initial Formation

The beginning of the journey ...

Come and See...

It is good to be here ...

to be with ...

to be sent ...

and there are other places also ...

The Beginning of the Journey ...

Come and See Pre-Postulancy

John 1:39

During pre-postulancy, those responsible should acquaint themselves personally with the candidate, her background and family, and help her to reflect on the meaning of the Christian and religious life and to acquire some understanding of the spirit and life of the Congregation. Const. #90

Vision

Each Province/Region of the Congregation encourages women who show a genuine interest in our way of life and who seek to live the Gospel vision as RNDMs.

Mission

This phase of welcome and contact with interested women enjoys great variance across the congregation and is therefore adapted to local reality.

A sister will accompany these women in ways appropriate to their cultural realities and their personal maturity, until they are ready to begin the journey of initial formation in the Congregation.

It is good to be here Postulancy

Luke 9:33

The Postulancy gives the young woman the opportunity of growing in knowledge and understanding of the life and spirit of the Congregation, of clarifying her motives, and of making a gradual transition ..Const 101

Vision

Women who have consistently expressed their interest and desire to enter into our RNDM way of life are provided with a process that will help them to discover their deeper self, God and a greater understanding of their own motivation.

Mission

- to introduce the woman to initial experiences of community living
- to provide opportunities for prayer, reflection and spiritual direction
- to introduce her to the life and spirit of the Congregation through studies and mission experience
- to encourage her to appreciate and understand her own culture while at the same time valuing the cultural diversity and internationality of the Congregation.

Process

Postulancy is the first phase in the journey of initial formation and it is a period of transition for the woman. This process needs to be adapted to the social and cultural realities of the particular area of the Congregation.

At the same time there is a need for a common understanding of the basic elements of the process. Human development, basics of spirituality, faith formation, congregational studies, language, getting to know other cultures, and practical skills are all part of the learning.

Toward the end of this period, time is taken for reflection and discernment, in preparation for the decisive step of beginning religious life, by entry into the novitiate.

...to be with Novitiate

Mark 3:14

Religious life begins with the Novitiate. During this period of probation the novice is initiated gradually into the demands of the religious missionary vocation, lived in community and the practice of the evangelical counsels, according to our rule and constitutions. Const 103

Vision

Through a wholistic and integrated process, to accompany women as they prepare themselves to live celibately, in covenant with one another, and to share with and listen to each other in faith and love and so to make a total gift of themselves to God.

Mission

to grow in personal relationship with Christ through spiritual discernment, contemplation, silence and solitude

to develop in the woman an appreciation of her psychosexual self and her womanhood, recognizing the principles of human maturation

to experience and develop an understanding of what it is to live the vowed life

to deepen and share the RNDM charism through an understanding of Trinitarian spirituality, our history, life and writings of Euphrasie Barbier, the Rule, Constitutions and other congregational writings.