

# RELIGIOSORUM INSTITUTIO

## Congregation for Religious

Careful Selection And Training Of Candidates For The States Of Perfection And Sacred Orders (S. C. Rel., 2 Feb., 1961).

An Instruction, Religiosorum institutio, to the Superiors of Religious Communities, Societies without vows, and Secular Institutes on the careful selection and training of candidates for the states of perfection and Sacred Orders is as follows.

## Purpose, Binding Force, And Extent Of This Instruction

### 1. The Instruction Quantum Religiones

The training of religious and of others pursuing perfection and aspiring to the ranks of the clergy in the states of perfection has always been particularly close to the heart of the Sacred Congregation for Religious. Thus, in the Instruction Quantum Religiones, of 1 December, 1931, the Sacred Congregation instructed the superiors general of religious communities and clerical societies on the proper religious and clerical training of their subjects, and on the investigation to be carried out before profession and the reception of Sacred Orders.<sup>1</sup>

The main purpose of this Instruction was, in so far as human frailty may permit, to forestall serious cases of defection not only from the religious state but likewise from the sacred ranks in which religious had been enrolled through the reception of Orders.

### 2. The Purpose Of This Instruction And Its Binding Force

Now, however, without any change in the chief directives and criteria contained in the aforesaid Instruction, this Sacred Congregation proposes to take up this same question again and to treat it anew (can. 22), especially as regards the selection and training of candidates and the investigation to be made prior to professions and Sacred Orders in order that the aforesaid Instruction may be in complete harmony with subsequent developments and with later pertinent pontifical documents.

### 3. The Principal Sources Of This Instruction

In the Jubilee Year of 1950 there was held at Rome an International Congress of the States of Perfection, in which specialists summoned from all over the world on the basis of their knowledge and experience, spoke and wrote on the selection, nurturing, and perfecting of religious and clerical vocations. These discussions were published in the four-volume Acta et Documenta of the Congress. Later, congresses were held in various nations and in them the same topics were taken up.

During this same period other documents of the utmost importance appeared. These were the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI, of immortal memory, Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, of 20 December, 1935,<sup>2</sup> and various others published by Pope Pius XII, of venerable memory, to whom the states of perfection are so indebted, such as his Exhortation to the Clergy, Menti Nostrae, of 23 September, 1950,<sup>3</sup> his encyclical letter, Sacra Virginitas, of 25 March, 1954,<sup>4</sup> his allocution, Sollemnis Conventus, of 24 June, 1939, to

all clerical students and their superiors,<sup>5</sup> his allocution, *Haud Mediocri*, of 11 February, 1958, to the superiors general of religious orders and congregations resident in Rome.<sup>6</sup> and especially the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, of 31 May, 1956, on religious, clerical and apostolic training of clerics in the states of perfection.<sup>7</sup> Nor of any lesser value are those documents which the Sovereign Pontiff, John XXIII, happily reigning, has issued on the priesthood and priestly formation, both in his solemn allocution on the occasion of the first Roman Synod and likewise in the Synodal Constitutions.<sup>8</sup> There was also published a reserved Circular Letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments on 27 December, 1955,<sup>8a</sup> addressed to local Ordinaries for secular clerics, imposing an investigation of candidates before their promotion to Orders.

Certainly it was most opportune for, and even the duty of, this Sacred Congregation to incorporate the fruits of this longstanding and rich experience and evolution into a new Instruction, which would likewise serve as a particularized commentary on the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae* (cf. n. 40 and the *Statuta Generalia*, art. 17).

#### 4. To Whom This Instruction Is Addressed

This Instruction is addressed to the superiors of religious communities, societies living the common life, and secular institutes, especially as far as the last are concerned, if their members are incorporated into the institute as clerics. Therefore, although frequently, for the sake of convenience, only religious will be mentioned, the norms and criteria set forth in this Instruction are also applicable to the members of the other states of perfection (cf. *Stat. Gen.*, art. 16, §§ 1-2).

Likewise, although the Instruction refers especially to candidates for the clerical state, nevertheless those points which by their very nature deal with the selection and training of candidates for the states of perfection are, with due adaptations, to be applied also to lay religious, including religious women (*Ibid.*, §3, 2°).

## I. The More Common Causes Of Defection

#### 5. An Inquiry Into The Causes Of Defections

It is necessary at the very outset to set down the most frequent grounds alleged for defections and to lay before superiors the reasons which religious priests claim to be the causes why they lose interest in the life they have embraced and ask the Holy See for secularization or even for "laicization," i.e., reduction to the lay state. Attention must be drawn also to the pretexts under which these same religious priests presume to leave the religious life and return to the world on their own initiative, or even make so bold as to question before the Apostolic Dicastries their clerical obligations, especially celibacy. Once the causes of defections are known, superiors will be able to exercise more experienced care and vigilance either in examining the divine vocation of candidates or in strengthening and preserving it by their devoted efforts.

In general, the aforesaid religious claim either that they entered on this way of life and continued in it without a genuine divine vocation, or that they lost the genuine divine vocation during the period of their formation or in the early years of their ministerial life.

#### 6. Undue Family Influence

Frequently such religious claim undue influence from parents and members of their family, inasmuch as

they were born into a large or poor family and thus were advised either by their parents or by other relatives to leave the paternal home and go to the seminary as a happy solution of family difficulties and were even at times pressured by request, persuasion, or even disguised threats, into embracing the life of perfection and the priestly life and continuing in it. As a result, they allege that their repugnance or reluctance to accept the religious clerical state, for which they had an aversion, was broken down.

#### 7. Undue Influence Of Superiors And Directors

There were also those who lay at the door of their religious superiors and their spiritual directors the responsibility for their most difficult situation, claiming that these latter, although they had noticed in them no happiness in the religious clerical life, no spirit of piety, and no zeal as they grew older, nevertheless did not hesitate to urge them on, either because they hoped the subjects would do better in the future or because they were more interested in the number than in the quality of vocations, or because, blinded by a false sense of kindness toward the candidates, they threatened them with the danger of loss of eternal salvation if they left the religious clerical state.

#### 8. Ignorance Of Obligations And Lack Of Liberty In Accepting Them

Not infrequently religious priests plead insufficient knowledge of religious and clerical obligations, especially celibacy, or uncertain will in advancing to perpetual profession or Sacred Orders. If they entered a religious seminary as young boys or in their early adolescent years with only a confused knowledge of the religious and ecclesiastical vocation or with a very uncertain will, these unfortunate religious and priests claim that they never got over this state of mind, once they had completed their studies and their years of formation. Nevertheless, they did not withdraw from the path on which they had entered either because they heedlessly followed their companions according to custom, or because, being bashful and incapable of any serious decision, they unwillingly went along with the urgings and counsels of their superiors. Hence they affirm that in making profession or receiving Orders they were not sufficiently aware of the obligations of the priestly life or did not accept them with full freedom.

#### 9. Fear Of An Uncertain Future

At times such candidates, on the verge of Sacred Orders or perpetual profession and somewhat mature in age, finding themselves without academic degrees and untrained in any art or liberal profession, were afraid to leave the religious life, feeling deep down in their hearts that if they returned to the world, they could not make an upright living unless by manual labor, or would be obliged to make difficult and uncertain efforts to acquire a liberal profession. Therefore they regarded the decision to continue in the religious clerical life as a lesser evil.

#### 10. Difficulty With Chastity

Sometimes these religious priests affirm that it is now impossible for them to observe chastity, first because of bad habits contracted in youth, which were sometimes corrected but still never completely eradicated, and secondly because of sexual tendencies of a pathological nature, which they feel cannot be brought under control either by ordinary or extraordinary means, even those of a spiritual order, in such a way that they frequently fall into the solitary sin.

#### 11. Loss Of The Religious Spirit

Lastly, not infrequently there is adduced as a cause the loss of the religious spirit either because, under the insidious impact of present-day naturalism, these priests become incapable of discipline and

religious observance, or because, living in religious houses an indolent and unproductive life, deceived by the desire of life outside and ill-regulated pseudo-apostolic activism and neglecting the interior life, they fall victims to dangers of all kinds, which they do not avoid and do not even recognize.

#### 12. Weakness And Subjective Character Of Such Arguments

Unfortunate religious priests bring forth these and other similar arguments, at times even attempting to make the Church responsible for their deplorable condition, as though the Church, through her ministers, had admitted them to the religious and priestly life without the necessary qualifications, or did not know how to train and protect them once they had been called unto the portion of the Lord. But, as the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments states in the above-mentioned Circular Letter: "it cannot be denied that these charges made by the priests during the trials have only a shadowy appearance of truth, for often the only proof is the statement made by the plaintiff alone, a very interested party, and not by witnesses or documents proved in court."<sup>8b</sup> Nor is this surprising since these unfortunate religious priests not infrequently take their present state of mind and psychic crisis, which has gradually evolved over a period of years, and unconsciously transfer it to the time of their profession and ordination, being unaware of the inner change which has taken place within themselves.

#### 13. Removal Of All Appearance Of Justification For These Claims; Superiors' Obligation In Conscience

And yet the honor of the Church, the welfare of religious communities and the edification of the faithful demand of superiors most accurate diligence and untiring zeal in order not to provide even a vestige of foundation for priests advancing such claims.

Superiors should see to it that they be not responsible for the mistakes or errors of those in charge of selecting and training young men. This will be the case if they are culpably uninformed of the norms laid down by the Church, or ignore them, or apply them carelessly; if, ignoring the necessary discernment of spirits, they admit into religious life and allow to remain therein those who have not been called by God, or if they neglect to give proper formation to those who are evidently called and to safeguard them in their divine vocation. Therefore, this Sacred Congregation regards it as its duty to exhort superiors most earnestly always to keep before their eyes the norms herein set forth, being mindful of the grave warning of this Sacred Congregation in its Instruction, *Illud Saepius*, of 18 August, 1915: "When a religious leaves his order, the superior of that same order, if he has diligently examined his conscience before God, will very frequently be well aware that he himself is not without fault and has failed in his duty. This neglect of duty is often verified either in the admission of candidates or in training them to the religious life, or, after they have made vows, in keeping watch over them."<sup>2</sup>

## II. The Care To Be Taken In The Selection Of Candidates For The State Of Perfection And The Clerical State

### A) General Warnings

#### 14. Quality Before Quantity

First of all, although vocations to the state of evangelical perfection and to the priesthood are to be promoted by every means (*Stat. Gen.*, art. 32), still care must be taken lest an immoderate desire to increase numbers should interfere with quality and selection. Let all be convinced that, unless great zeal for an abundance of students is closely bound up with proper care for their formation, such zeal does not produce the desired effects, and even does just the contrary. For just as it is evident that, with the help of

God's grace, nothing contributes more to inspiring vocations than the exemplary life of those who have been properly formed, in the same way nothing is more conducive to impeding the growth of vocations or to suffocating them than the example of mistakes which are unfortunately beheld in those who are without proper solid formation. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice and all these things will be added unto you. We can say, and all superiors should repeat: Let us seek out quality first of all, because then, if we may use such an expression, quantity will automatically be present by itself. This will be the concern of Divine Providence. It is not our task to look for numbers, since it is not given to us to inspire vocations in souls. In this truth there is contained the whole of the theology of a vocation: it comes from God and only God can give it. It is our task to nurture this vocation, to enrich it, and to adorn it . . . This is the guarantee and promise of your future prosperity."<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, experience teaches us that God favors with an abundance of vocations those religious communities which flourish with the rigor of discipline and carry out their own proper role in the Mystical Body of Christ, and that, on the contrary, those communities suffer a lack of candidates, whose members do not comply faithfully with His divine counsels. Wherefore, those who are suffering from a shortage of vocations and anxiously devote themselves to collecting them, using at times methods and procedures which are certainly not to be recommended, would do well to exert the greatest care in training in the best way possible the candidates who spontaneously come to them or are drawn to them by prudent means and are already entrusted to them by the Church and Divine Providence. For the rest, let us not be unmindful of the teaching of Holy Scripture, which the Sovereign Pontiff recalls to us in such timely fashion: "Gedeon, who had at his disposal an immense multitude of men apparently ready and prepared to fight all battles and conquer all difficulties, heard the voice of the Lord declaring that to accomplish hard and difficult tasks, rather than large numbers, the courage of a few was sufficient."<sup>11</sup>

#### 15. Positive Signs Of A Vocation

It will be helpful to recall, then, that only those candidates can be admitted who are free of any canonical impediment and who, at the same time, show positive signs of a divine vocation, conformably to the prescriptions of the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, and the *Statuta Generalia*, art. 31, § 2, 1°, 2°. Let this be the first and absolute principle in selecting vocations. For, as we are clearly admonished by the same Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*: "A call from God to enter the religious or the sacerdotal state is so necessary that, if this is lacking, the very foundation on which the whole edifice rests is wanting. For whom God has not called, His grace does not move nor assist."<sup>12</sup>

The canonical fitness of the candidate for bearing the obligations of the institute (can. 538; *Stat. Gen.*, art. 31, § 1) must be evinced by positive arguments (can. 973, §3), and it must consist in all the requirements and, according to differences in age, all the physical, intellectual and moral qualities, either of nature or of grace, whereby a young man is rightly prepared for the worthy acceptance and performance of religious and priestly obligations (*Stat. Gen.*, art. 33):

#### 16. Moral Certainty Of The Fitness Of Candidates

Candidates should not be admitted to religious seminaries except after careful investigation and the securing of detailed information on each individual. In seminaries and novitiates the necessary proofs and investigations are to be repeated with faithful observance of the General Statutes of the Apostolic Constitution *Sedes Sapientiae*, art. 31-34. Doubtful fitness is not enough but "as often as there still remains some prudent doubt as to the fitness of a candidate, it is wrong to permit him to contract obligations (can. 571, § 2), especially if they be definitive, (can. 575, § 1; 637).<sup>13</sup> Still greater care must be exercised in this regard if there be question of Sacred Orders.<sup>14</sup> The period of trial is to be continued as provided for in canon law, and all possible means must be employed which may be useful in acquiring this moral certitude" (can. 571, § 2; 574, § 2; *Stat. Gen.*, art. 34, § 2, 1°, 2°, 3°). Appropriately,

therefore, all due proportion being guarded as to the different degrees of probation and selection, should superiors and all those engaged in deciding vocations apply to themselves the canonical prescriptions whereby the bishop is warned "that he should confer Sacred Orders on no one unless he is morally certain, by positive arguments, of the candidate's canonical fitness; otherwise, he not only sins most grievously himself but exposes himself to the danger of sharing in the sins of others" (can. 973, § 3). For the selection and training of a religious candidate is a step toward sacred ordination and in the ordination of religious, as Pius XI wisely warns, the Bishop "always places full confidence in the judgment of their superiors."<sup>15</sup> Consequently, in case of doubt as to fitness, it is certainly unlawful to proceed further for there is involved something on which the welfare of the Church and the salvation of souls depend in a special manner, and in which consequently, the safer opinion must always be followed. "This safer opinion in the question now before us, does more to protect the best interests of ecclesiastical candidates since it turns them aside from a road on which they might be led on to eternal ruin."<sup>16</sup>

#### 17. The Responsibility Of The Internal And External Forum; Both Should Use The Same Principles

In this most important task the chief responsibility lies with major superiors. It is their work to organize and direct this entire activity, to be acquainted thoroughly with the norms set down by the Apostolic See, and to make sure they are faithfully carried out. On them, consequently, in this matter lies the greatest burden of responsibility (Stat. Gen., art. 27, §1). But major superiors need the helpful cooperation of all who are in charge of selecting and training candidates, whether they be superiors and directors in the external forum or confessors and spiritual prefects, each within the limits of his office. For some of the signs of a divine vocation or lack of it, by their very nature, come to the knowledge of superiors in the external forum, while others, since they belong rather to the intimate realm of mind and conscience, can oftentimes be known only by confessors and spiritual directors. All these individuals accept a burden in conscience in the choice of priests and religious and in their admission to profession and to ordination, and through their ignorance or negligence they may have a share in the sins of others. Nevertheless, they must use different methods in discharging their duties. Directors in the external forum must do their duty exteriorly according to the norms of common and particular law. The case is different with confessors who are bound by "the inviolable sacramental seal," and with spiritual directors in the stricter sense (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 28, § 2, 9<sup>o</sup>), who are likewise bound to secrecy "by virtue of the religious office they have accepted." Confessors and spiritual directors should strive, but only in the internal forum, to see that those who either are not called by God or who have become unworthy should not go farther. But although the procedure in the internal and the external forum is different, it is of the utmost importance that "all should use the same principles in testing vocations and taking appropriate precautions to the end that young men may be prudently admitted to profession and to Orders."<sup>17</sup>

#### 18. The Role Of The Confessor And The Spiritual Director

Confessors have the grave duty of warning, urging, and ordering unfit subjects, privately and in conscience, with no regard for human respect, to withdraw from the religious and clerical life. Although they may appear to have all the dispositions required for sacramental absolution, they are, nevertheless, not for that reason to be regarded as worthy of profession or ordination. The principles governing the sacramental forum, especially those pertinent to the absolution of sins, are different from the criteria whereby, according to the mind of the Church, judgment is formed on fitness for the priesthood and the religious life. Consequently, penitents who are certainly unworthy of profession and ordination can be absolved if they show proof of true sorrow for their sins and seriously promise to drop the idea of going on to the religious or clerical state, but they must be effectively barred from profession and ordination. Likewise spiritual directors are under obligation in the non-sacramental internal forum, to judge of the divine vocation of those entrusted to them and are also under the obligation to warn and privately urge

those who are unfit, to withdraw voluntarily from the life they have embraced.

#### 19. The Careful Choice Of Confessors And Spiritual Directors

Lastly, using this occasion, this Sacred Congregation earnestly stresses for superiors both the importance and the necessity of carefully choosing as confessors and spiritual directors in religious seminaries men properly trained and gifted with great prudence and perspicacity in understanding the minds of the young (Stat. Gen., art. 24, § 2). Superiors themselves must encourage a watchful and uniform policy among all those dedicated to the formation of the young lest they allow unqualified candidates to ascend to Orders.

#### 20. The Cooperation Of Candidates; Recommendation Of Sincerity And Docility

Finally, candidates should be prudently urged to cooperate in the formation of a correct judgment on their vocation, for to them this is of the utmost importance. They should understand correctly that leaving the religious life and the ranks of the clergy is not always and for everyone an evil. It is not an evil but is actually something good for those who are not called or are not properly disposed. Indeed, infidelity resulting in the loss of a divine vocation is certainly dangerous, but the situation would be still more serious if those who are not called or who are unworthy were blindly to take on religious and clerical obligations. Therefore, they are especially urged to practice simplicity and sincerity in opening their hearts, and docility and perfect obedience to the counsels and precepts of their confessors, directors, and superiors: "According as young men will be known for their integrity and sincerity, all the more effectively can they be assisted by their superiors, when the time comes to decide if they are divinely called to enter upon the way of perfection and to receive Sacred Orders."<sup>18</sup>

Consequently, all candidates should be well aware of the mind of the Church on the manifestation of conscience as set forth in canon 530, § 2, and as explained in the Statuta Generalia.<sup>19</sup>

#### 21. The Time For Definitive Selection

As for the time when the definitive selection is to be made, every means should be diligently employed to insure that this selection takes place within the time limits determined by law. Superiors shall bear well in mind that only rarely should a further extension of probation be requested (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 34, §3). The excellent norm laid down in the encyclical letter, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, should be observed: "And although it is better not to postpone this selection unduly, since in this matter delay usually leads to error and causes harm, nevertheless, whatever may have been the motive for the delay, just as soon as it is evident that there has been a deviation from the right path, then, with no trace of human respect, the remedy must be applied."<sup>20</sup>

### B) The Required Freedom

#### 22. Freedom: A Sign Of A Divine Vocation

Among the requisites for a genuine divine vocation there is rightly listed the free will of the candidates or a choice free of all moral pressure along with perfect knowledge of the obligations of their state. Full freedom is prescribed by ecclesiastical law for the reception of Orders and for the validity of the novitiate and profession<sup>21</sup> and, in virtue of art. 32, § 3 of the Statuta Generalia, in the recruitment of vocations everything must be avoided which could diminish the freedom of the candidates or improperly affect it. Particularly in the free acceptance of this counsel there is discerned the special call from God or

the movement of the Holy Spirit, who interiorly enlightens and inspires a person, who has the other qualifications, to pursue the evangelical counsels or to embrace the priesthood. For the divine inspiration required by St. Pius X<sup>22</sup> in a true vocation, or that marked attraction for sacred duties mentioned by Pius XI in his encyclical letter, *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*,<sup>23</sup> is discerned in their right propensity and intention of mind or the choice of their free will (cf. can. 538), rather than in an inner urging of conscience and sensible attraction which may be lacking.

### 23. Superiors Should Seek Out Supernatural Motives

Since it is the task of superiors to pass judgment on the vocation of their candidates, they should the more carefully examine the spontaneous response of these candidates or the decision of their free will. Let them examine very frequently into the supernatural motives of vocations in their students, especially if they come from poor families, or are without the means of leading an upright life in the world, or are lacking academic degrees, or if they are known for narrow-mindedness, anxiety or ambivalence, worried by scruples, or completely incapable of facing up to anything important. To provide fuller knowledge of candidates, they can request of them an "historical sketch" of their vocation in so far as this may be possible. Thus they can be brought face to face with genuine personal reflection on their own vocation.

### 24. Fatherly Help For Those Who Suffer Interior Or Exterior Trials

Superiors should not fail to remind candidates in a fatherly way that if any one, as the result of undue influence from parents or relatives, or because of financial difficulties, feels himself being forced into profession or ordination against his will, he should confidently make the situation known to his superiors or confessor. These latter should show themselves ready to provide assistance to enable the candidate to escape this danger unscathed, providing ways and means, if possible, to help him conveniently obtain a respectable livelihood in the world.<sup>24</sup>

### 25. Acquiescence To The Judgment Of Directors Of The Forum

When any student, on the advice of his confessor or spiritual director, informs his superiors that he does not have the qualifications for the priesthood, then the superior should accept this statement and make no further investigation. If the candidate in question is a subdeacon or deacon, then, with his consent, the superior should take up with the Apostolic See his reduction to the lay state.<sup>25</sup>

### 26. How To Handle The Hesitant

In the case of candidates who are undecided and apprehensive and who cannot make up their minds either to accept or leave the religious life or to receive or decline Orders, superiors should dismiss those whom they recognize as unworthy. Those whom they deem qualified should be exhorted to make vows or to agree to be ordained. Nevertheless, they should refrain from forcing profession or ordination on them and should leave the final decision to their own free will, avoiding all undue influence which could give the impression of drawing them on to profession or ordination by coaxing or by threatening spiritual disaster and the pains of hell which they would incur if they withdrew from profession or ordination.<sup>26</sup>

## C) Necessary Knowledge Of The Obligations

### 27. Candidates Should Be Taught The Obligations To Be Assumed



Candidates Must make vows and receive Orders deliberately; otherwise they would not be free. Superiors are seriously obliged in conscience to make sure that aspirants and novices as well as students throughout the entire period of their studies be carefully instructed on the duties and obligations of the religious and clerical life. The duties and obligations of the religious and clerical life should be discussed frequently by novice masters and spiritual prefects, each in his own field, by means of timely warnings and the usual instructions and exhortations. Preachers should likewise take up this subject in retreats before perpetual profession and sacred ordinations. Lastly, in their explanation of the tract on Orders, professors of moral theology should provide lectures on clerical duties and obligations, and candidates for Orders should be questioned on these points in their examinations.

#### 28. Denunciation Of Temerity In Embracing The Religious And Clerical Life

It is commendable to keep the sanctity of the religious life and the dignity and excellence of the priesthood frequently placed before candidates from the very beginning and throughout the whole period of their formation, and defection from a genuine divine vocation is justly censured. But similarly, and even more severely, should rashness in embracing the religious and priestly state be denounced and its manifold dangers pointed out for those who either were not called by God or have become unworthy of a divine vocation, but who venture to make vows or to receive Sacred Orders. Superiors should form the conscience of candidates, carefully avoiding all error and confusion in their teaching on the religious and priestly vocation, and on virginity and Christian marriage. Let all be firmly convinced that the time for sounding out a vocation does not lapse completely with the first admission of the candidate, but continues on to perpetual profession and ordination to the priesthood.<sup>27</sup>

#### D) The Required Chastity

##### 29. Importance Of This Point; Young Persons Are To Be Properly Instructed And Warned Of Its Dangers

Among the proofs and signs of a divine vocation the virtue of chastity is regarded as absolutely necessary "because it is largely for this reason that candidates for the ranks of the clergy choose this type of life for themselves and persevere in it." Consequently:

- a) "Watchful and diligent care is to be taken that candidates for the clergy should have a high esteem and love for chastity, and should safeguard it in their souls.
- b) "Not only, therefore, are clerics to be informed in due time on the nature of priestly celibacy, the chastity which they are to observe (cf. can. 132), and the demands of this obligation, but they are likewise to be warned of the dangers into which they can fall on this account. Consequently, candidates for Sacred Orders are to be exhorted to protect themselves from dangers from their earliest years."<sup>28</sup>
- c) Although virginity embraced for the kingdom of heaven is more excellent than matrimony, nevertheless, candidates for Sacred Orders should not be unaware of the nobility of married life as exemplified in Christian marriage established by the plan of God. Therefore, let them be so instructed that, with a clear understanding of the advantages of Christian matrimony, they may deliberately and freely embrace the greater good of priestly and religious chastity.
- d) But should superiors find a candidate unable to observe ecclesiastical celibacy and practice priestly chastity, then, completely ignoring any other outstanding qualities, they should bar him from the religious life and the priesthood (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 34, § 2, 4°), conforming to the following directives and using all prudence and discretion in the application of the same, namely:

### 30. Those To Be Excluded; Practical Directives

1. A candidate who shows himself certainly unable to observe religious and priestly chastity, either because of frequent sins against chastity or because of a sexual bent of mind or excessive weakness of will, is not to be admitted to the minor seminary and, much less, to the novitiate or to profession. If he has already been accepted but is not yet perpetually professed, then he should be sent away immediately or advised to withdraw, according to individual cases, no matter what point in his formation he has already reached. Should he be perpetually professed, he is to be barred absolutely and permanently from tonsure and the reception of any Order, especially Sacred Orders. If circumstances should so demand, he shall be dismissed from the community, with due observance of the prescriptions of canon law.

2. Consequently, any candidate who has a habit of solitary sins and who has not given well-founded hope that he can break this habit within a period of time to be determined prudently, is not to be admitted to the novitiate. Nor can a candidate be admitted to first profession or to renewal of vows unless he has really amended his ways. But if a novice or a temporarily professed religious gives evidence of a firm purpose of amendment with good grounds for hope of success, his probation can be extended as provided for in canon law (canons 571, §2; 574, §2; 973, § 3; Stat. Gen., art. 34, § 2, 3°).

Well-grounded hope of amendment can be provided by those youths who are physically and psychically normal or endowed with good bodily and mental health, who are noted for solid piety and the other virtues intimately connected with chastity, and who sincerely desire the religious and priestly life.

3. A much stricter policy must be followed in admission to perpetual profession and advancement to Sacred Orders. No one should be admitted to perpetual vows or promoted to Sacred Orders unless he has acquired a firm habit of continency and has given in every case consistent proof of habitual chastity over a period of at least one year. If within this year prior to perpetual profession or ordination to Sacred Orders doubt should arise because of new falls, the candidate is to be barred from perpetual profession or Sacred Orders (cf. above, no. 16) unless, as far as profession is concerned, time is available either by common law or by special indult to extend the period for testing chastity and there be question of a candidate who, as was stated above (no. 30, 2) affords good prospects of amendment.

4. If a student in a minor seminary has sinned gravely against the sixth commandment with a person of the same or the other sex, or has been the occasion of grave scandal in the matter of chastity, he is to be dismissed immediately as stipulated in canon 1371, except if prudent consideration of the act and of the situation of the student by the superiors or confessors should counsel a different policy in an individual case, sc., in the case of a boy who has been seduced and who is gifted with excellent qualities and is truly penitent, or when the sin was an objectively imperfect act.

If a novice or a professed religious who has not yet made perpetual vows should be guilty of the same offense, he is to be sent away from the community or, should the circumstances so demand, he is to be dismissed with due observance of canon 647, § 2, 1°. If a perpetually professed religious is found guilty of any such sin, he is to be perpetually excluded from tonsure and the reception of any further Order. If the case belongs to the external forum, he is to receive a canonical warning unless, as provided for in canons 653 and 668, there be grounds for sending him back to the world (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 34, § 2, 4°).

Lastly, should he be a subdeacon or deacon, then, without prejudice to the above-mentioned directives and if the case should so demand, the superiors should take up with the Holy See the question of his reduction to the lay state.

For these reasons, clerics who in their diocese or religious who in another community have sinned

gravely against chastity with another person are not to be admitted with a view to the priesthood, even on a trial basis, unless there be clear evidence of excusing causes or of circumstances which can at least notably diminish responsibility in conscience (Circular Letter of S. C. of the Sacraments, n. 16; Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 314).

**Advancement to religious vows and ordination should be barred to those who are afflicted with evil tendencies to homosexuality or pederasty, since for them the common life and the priestly ministry would constitute serious dangers.**

5. Very special investigation is needed for those students who, although they have hitherto been free of formal sins against chastity, nevertheless suffer from morbid or abnormal sexuality, especially sexual hyperesthesia or an erotic bent of nature, to whom religious celibacy would be a continual act of heroism and a trying martyrdom. For chastity, in so far as it implies abstinence from sexual pleasure, not only becomes very difficult for many people but the very state of celibacy and the consequent loneliness and separation from one's family becomes so difficult for certain individuals gifted with excessive sensitivity and tenderness, that they are not fit subjects for the religious life. This question should perhaps receive more careful attention from novice masters and superiors of scholasticates than from confessors since such natural tendencies do not come out so clearly in confession as in the common life and daily contact.

### 31. Care Of Psychopathic Cases

In addition, special attention must be paid to those who give evidence of neuropsychosis and who are described by psychiatrists as neurotics or psychopaths, especially those who are scrupulous, abulic, hysterical, or who suffer from some form of mental disease (schizophrenia, paranoia, etc.). The same is true of those who have a delicate constitution or, particularly, those who suffer from weakness of the nervous system or from protracted psychic melancholia, anxiety or epilepsy (can. 984, 3<sup>o</sup>), or who are afflicted with obsessions. Similarly, precautions are needed in examining the children of alcoholics or those tainted with some hereditary weakness, especially in the mental order (cf. Stat. Gen., art. 33; 34, § 1). Finally, those young men are in need of special attention who manifest exaggerated attachment to the comforts of life and worldly pleasures. Superiors should carefully examine all these types and subject them to a thorough examination by a prudent and expert Catholic psychiatrist who, after repeated examinations, will be in a position to determine whether or not they will be able to shoulder, with honor to that state, the burden of religious and priestly life, especially celibacy.

## III. Care In Training And Strengthening Vocations

### 32. Experienced Directors Should Be Appointed And Sought Out Wherever They May Be

After the accurate selection of vocations, superiors should have as their second principle the task of appointing excellent and experienced directors for the education of young religious conformably to art. 24 of the Statuta Generalia. "To these religious houses," advises Pius XI, "assign priests adorned with excellent virtue, and do not be afraid to take them away from other tasks which may be apparently more important but which cannot match this work of capital importance, which can be replaced by no other. Look for them also in other fields, wherever you find men capable and fit for this most noble task."<sup>29</sup> Only if this advice is heeded will this Instruction produce any real fruit; if this counsel is not heeded, then the entire Instruction will be to no purpose.

### 33. The Qualities And Appointment Of Those In Charge Of Formation

Let all superiors, each one within his own jurisdiction, exactly carry out all the pertinent prescriptions of the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, articles 24 and 25. Two points call for special emphasis in this Instruction:

1. Responsibility for formation should not be entrusted to younger religious. It should be observed, first of all, that it is extremely dangerous to turn over to younger priests the very difficult work of religious and priestly formation and especially the task of training minds, since these younger religious have not yet fully completed their own personal formation nor achieved the maturity of age required by canon 559, § 1, nor acquired any measure of experience in the ministry.<sup>30</sup>

2. Nor should they be assigned without preparation. Secondly, superiors should beware of directors who are chosen haphazardly or who are unprepared. A natural disposition is not enough but, presupposing all the natural and supernatural gifts needed for this difficult task, they usually have a real need to study ecclesiastical pedagogy because, in this sacred discipline, those in charge of formation learn the principles, criteria, and the practical norms of clerical and religious training according to the words and the mind of the Church. On the other hand, ignorance of these principles gives rise to many lamentable evils.

#### 34. Avoiding False Humanism

The Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, with the accompanying *Statuta Generalia*, deals with religious, clerical, and apostolic formation. Nothing needs to be added to this Constitution lest we fall into unnecessary repetitions, but some points having a particular bearing on our purpose need to be mentioned. In the first place, those charged with the training of youth should never lose sight of the warning of Pius XII, formulated in the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, n. 23 (Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 176), where he states: "Nevertheless, though all should make much of the human and natural training of the religious cleric, the supernatural sanctification of the soul undoubtedly has the first place in the entire course of his development."

Therefore, the religious life must be defended against any appearance of false humanism or naturalism, and its supernatural character and sanctity must be safeguarded by all available means. "This is necessary particularly today, if at any time, when so-called naturalism has worked its way into the minds and souls of men."<sup>31</sup>

#### 35. Natural Considerations Are Not To Be Made Light Of But Supernatural Ones Are To Be Preferred

Consequently, supernatural reasons for embracing religious vows and the priestly life should be stressed and they should be preferred to the natural virtues in the training of young religious. For rightly, in this matter, does Leo XIII warn: "It is truly difficult to understand how those imbued with Christian wisdom can prefer natural to supernatural virtues and attribute to the former greater efficacy and fecundity. Will nature, with the help of grace, be weaker than if left to its own powers? Did those most holy men whom the Church admires and openly honors show themselves weak and incompetent in the order of nature because they were outstanding for Christian virtue?"<sup>32</sup>

And Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution, *Sedes Sapientiae*, teaches as follows: "With regard to the resources and methods of education, those which nature itself supplies and those which are offered by the human ingenuity of the present age, if they are good, are clearly not to be neglected, but to be highly esteemed and wisely employed. However, there is no more fatal mistake than to rely exclusively or excessively on these natural means and to relegate supernatural aids and resources to a secondary place or in any way to neglect them. Because in order to attain religious and clerical perfection and apostolic

results, the supernatural means, the sacraments, prayer, mortification, and the like, are not merely necessary but altogether primary and essential."<sup>33</sup>

### 36. Training In Obedience And Self-Sacrifice

On more than one occasion in these modern times the Roman Pontiffs have spoken on religious obedience and abnegation of the will, and they have enlightened us on their supernatural nature, the diligence and perfection with which religious should practice them, on dangerous doctrines on these subjects and, in particular, on the false concept of personality and a certain popular or democratic spirit which is making its way into men's minds and which makes obedience as taught and practiced by Christ our Lord altogether void of meaning.

Attention should be called to the pernicious effects on the religious life of that practical "system" which, ignoring more or less the obligations of the religious life, gives in to all the inclinations and pleasures of nature, which are not only not regarded as unlawful but are even looked upon as a postulate of our times and as a perfecting of human nature and, as a result, as something owed to nature or at least altogether permitted. Whence, upon the pretext of progress, bodily comforts and pleasures of all kinds are sought out as well as freedom for the internal and external senses, the satisfaction of one's faculties, and the indiscriminate indulgence of curiosity in regard to books, newspapers, radio, movies, television,<sup>34</sup> profane worldly spectacles, and, lastly, a life without subjection, with ample free play for one's will and activity. All these endanger even the essential obligations of the religious life since they preclude any spirit of humility, self-sacrifice, and mortification which, on the contrary, according to the words of Christ, "If any one wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," (Matt. 16:24), must be taken as the foundation of the entire Christian life<sup>35</sup> and which can be achieved only through crucifixion to the world (Gal. 6:14). "He who is half-hearted or slothful," the Sovereign Pontiff exhorts, "who wishes to loll around in the comforts of this life, who burns with excessive thirst for human things and human knowledge, and who wants to experience all that earth can give, can neither be nor be called a true soldier of the kingdom of God. Beloved sons, take careful note of this, namely, that the secret and fruitful power of your future apostolate lies particularly in the necessary right detachment of soul from the things of earth." "The man who, shying away from the austerity of religious discipline, would want to live in a religious community just as if he were a man of the world, who seeks out according to his own will whatever seems to be to his own advantage, whatever pleases and satisfies him — would that man be worthy of Christ his Head?"<sup>36</sup> Consequently, superiors have a grave obligation to implant the following rule of the life of perfection in the souls of their young subjects: religious may use these comforts and pleasures of life only in so far as they contribute to the pursuit of evangelical perfection and the proper exercise of the apostolate according to one's own constitutions. This norm differs not a little from the one used as a standard for the common state of the Christian life.

However, this does not prevent the acceptance of today's fine, useful discoveries when they are regarded as aids to a fuller formation, or as helps in multiplying apostolic activities and advancing perfection, carefully shunning all the extras which please and satisfy nature but which are not at all necessary for the achieving of the scope of the religious life and the apostolate. Wherefore, buildings intended for seminaries should be built and furnished according to the norms of religious simplicity and poverty, which demand that these houses be so organized that the minds of the students will be imbued with that spirit of austerity and self-sacrifice which, by its very nature, is required both by the state of the evangelical counsels and likewise by their future apostolic life.

### 37. Students Should Be Trained For The Apostolate, But Especially For A Spiritual And Deeply Religious And Priestly Life

Lastly, it is an all too clear fact that many young men at the present time are more interested in the external activity of the apostolate, which falls in well with their particular bent of mind, than in the religious perfection of their own souls, of which they have only vague ideas and little esteem. Because of this, after some years in the active life, they are bored by religious practices whose real value they do not understand, or which they regard as hindrances to the apostolate. Then they want to be free of these observances and wish to enter the secular clergy. In order to forestall this danger, superiors, in training their students, should take very special care that the life of evangelical perfection is kept before them and explained in its various phases that they may be attracted to the religious life and be strengthened in perseverance therein, not merely out of the desire of engaging in the apostolate, but particularly from a sincere determination to pursue evangelical perfection unwaveringly through the observance of the evangelical counsels and their own constitutions (can. 593) out of an intense love of God in imitation of Jesus Christ and a supernatural desire of sanctifying their souls, because, as Pius XII notes, "the priest is by his very office an instrument for the sanctification of others, so much so that the salvation of souls and the growth of the Kingdom of God depend in a considerable degree upon his holiness."<sup>37</sup>

#### **IV. Declarations And Investigations Required Before Profession Or Incorporation, And Before Orders**

##### **38. Attestation Of One's Own Vocation To Sacred Orders In The Religious Life**

Since in the acceptance of religious or clerical obligations it is most important to safeguard and foster the liberty and spontaneous freedom of the candidates and to avoid completely the weakness which may be called the "follow-the-crowd" attitude, and since it is altogether proper that in serious decisions in matters affecting their own life they form the habit of thinking for themselves, the following directives shall henceforth be observed by all superiors of clerical Religious Communities, Societies and Secular Institutes.

Before temporary profession, which absolutely must precede promotion to tonsure and Minor Orders, novices are to present to their superiors a written declaration in which they attest explicitly to their vocation to the state of perfection and the clerical state, and at the same time declare their firm intention to bind themselves forever to the ranks of the clergy in the state of perfection.<sup>38</sup> This declaration can again be demanded of temporarily professed candidates before perpetual profession. These petitions and attestations are to be preserved in the archives. Lest the students sign approved printed formulas mechanically, they should write out these declarations in their own hand and, before they sign their name, should carefully consider, in consultation with their spiritual director, each and every one of the points contained therein.

##### **39. Above All, The Fitness Of The Candidate Is To Be Established Clearly**

Superiors should not allow any one to be advanced to Orders, even only Minor Orders, without clear evidence, secured through careful examination, regarding his conduct, piety, modesty, chastity, inclinations for the clerical state, progress in ecclesiastical studies, and religious discipline.<sup>39</sup> To obtain this with greater certainty, superiors should get the opinion of the spiritual prefect, if he is directly responsible for the training of the students, and that of others who, because of their special association with the students, may be in a position to have a thorough knowledge of their life and conduct.<sup>40</sup> These opinions should not be accepted lightly but should be carefully weighed, with all due consideration of the prudence, sincerity, and maturity of judgment of those who have given them.

An authentic report of these investigations and of the outcome of these inquiries should be drawn up and

kept in the archives.

Finally, the superiors, either personally or through some other experienced and prudent priest likely to win the confidence of the students, should question them carefully in order to acquire still greater certainty that they are aspiring to Orders in the religious state freely, deliberately, and for supernatural motives.

#### 40. The Best Time For Conferring Sacred Orders; Major Orders Should Not Be Conferred Before Perpetual Or Definitive Profession

As regards ordination itself, this Sacred Congregation adopts the timely directives formulated by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments in no. 14 of its Circular Letter, namely: For the more careful and immediate preparation of candidates for Orders, especially Sacred Orders, provision should be made that sacred ordinations be had at the time more fit for them, at a date well known ahead of time and never unexpectedly. As a result, it seems very appropriate to exclude the time immediately preceding or following the end of the scholastic year. At this time, as a rule, the students, tired by work and preoccupied in mind because of the examinations recently taken in sacred studies or because of those soon to be taken, lack the necessary peace of mind for being properly able to ponder the very serious business of their ordination.

As for the reception of Major Orders, superiors of the states of perfection should bear in mind that they may not promote their students to these orders before perpetual profession or incorporation (can. 964, 3°, 4°). In those states of perfection which do not have perpetual obligations or vows, superiors are likewise forbidden to promote their candidates to Sacred Orders before these vows or obligations have become definitive.<sup>41</sup>

#### 41. New Inquiry Before Subdeaconate

Before candidates are admitted to the subdeaconate, superiors must make a new inquiry on the above-mentioned points (n. 39). To this end, the records of the investigation already made and preserved in the archives are to be examined anew and further testimony on the conduct and spiritual qualities of the student is to be compared with previous reports in order to see clearly what progress these young men have made since their first profession both in religious discipline and in clerical studies. After all this, if the candidates are found worthy and fit, and if there is no canonical reason for withholding them from the reception of Orders, the superiors may issue dimissorial or testimonial letters for their ordination, with due observance of the prescriptions of canon law and their own constitutions.<sup>42</sup>

#### 42. Oath To Be Signed Before The Subdeaconate

In all the states of perfection, before presenting candidates for the subdeaconate, superiors must, in view of the sacred ordination which is to follow in proper time and in addition to the inquiry prescribed above, demand an attestation written personally by the candidates and confirmed under oath before the superior in the following terms:

"I, the undersigned, . . . a member of the (Order, Congregation, Society, Institute of . . . ), in presenting this petition to Superiors for the reception of the Order of the Subdeaconate, after having carefully considered the matter before God, do hereby testify under oath: 1) that in the reception of the said Sacred Order I am moved by no coercion, compulsion, or fear, but am seeking it of my own accord, and do of my own full and free will desire to embrace it together with the obligations that are attached to it. 2) I acknowledge that I am fully informed of all the obligations that flow from the aforesaid Sacred

Order, and I freely embrace them, and resolve with the help of God to keep them faithfully during my entire life. 3) I declare that I clearly understand all that the vow of chastity and the law of celibacy prescribe, and I firmly resolve with the help of God to observe these obligations faithfully until the end of my life. 4) Finally, I sincerely promise that I will always, according to the sacred canons, most respectfully obey in all things which are commanded me by my Superiors according to the discipline of the Church, and am prepared to give good example both in work and in word, so that in the reception of this great office I may be worthy to receive the reward which God has promised. To all this I testify and swear upon these sacred Gospels which I touch with my hand.

This \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_ 19\_\_ 43

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

#### 43. Before Deaconate Or Priesthood Superiors Should Carefully Inquire Into The Fitness Of Candidates

Although for the Order of deaconate and priesthood it is not necessary to gather such detailed information and to require new testimonials, nevertheless, superiors should be watchful and determine whether, in the interval between the conferral of one sacred ordination and the next, any new factors may have emerged which might raise doubts on their vocation to the priesthood or show they have no vocation. In this case, after a most careful investigation and after seeking the advice of prudent men, superiors should strictly forbid the reception of any new Order and should refer the case to this Sacred Congregation, which, according to the requirements of individual cases, will decide what seems most opportune in the Lord.<sup>44</sup>

#### 44. In General, Dispensations Are Not To Be Requested

Superiors should bear in mind the prescription of the Statuta Generalia, art. 34, § 3, 2°, 3°, namely: "Only in individual cases and for causes which are proportionately really serious superiors venture to ask for dispensations concerning: . . . 2° age and the other requirements for Orders, especially Sacred Orders; 3° the organized course of studies, either as regards the individual disciplines, attendance at class, or passing examinations." Superiors of religious orders who have the faculty of anticipating sacred ordinations beyond the limits laid down by common law should, in the use of this privilege, as long as it remains in force, follow the same restrictive criterion as that formulated in art. 34. In addition, as is proper in the use of other privileges, they should comply with the practice and rules customarily observed by the S. Congregation for Religious in granting similar indulgences to those subject to common law.

When there is question of age, superiors should lean more toward postponing rather than anticipating ordination.

#### 45. Superiors' Obligation In Conscience In Issuing Dimissorial Or Testimonial Letters

As regards the ordination of religious, in virtue of canon law major superiors either issue dimissorial letters to the ordaining Bishops (can. 964, 2°, 3°; 966, § 1) or at least they present their candidates for ordination with testimonial letters (can. 993, 5°). By these testimonial letters the religious superior not only testifies that the candidates belong to his community but also certifies that they have completed the prescribed studies, have taken the oath, and have complied with the other requirements of law (can. 995, § 1). Hence it is clear that the very serious obligation, which binds Bishops to train, test, and choose their secular candidates who wish to receive Sacred Orders, likewise extends to religious superiors to whom it pertains to permit their subjects to advance to Sacred Orders. And although, as canon law



provides (can. 997, § 2), Bishops are free to disregard the declarations of superiors and to examine religious ordinands personally, nevertheless, they are not bound to do so but, before God and the Church, they may accept the testimony of superiors and throw back on them the full responsibility in conscience for the training and the worthiness of their candidates (can. 970; 995, § 2).

## V. The Care Of Newly Ordained Priests

### 46. Precautions To Be Taken In The First Years Of The Priesthood; The Dangers Of Inexperience

After they have completed their course of studies and the pastoral year and have received Sacred Orders, young priests should start their ministry with all due precautions, aware of the very special dangers confronting them in the first years of their priesthood, during which, not infrequently, as Pius XII observed in his exhortation to the clergy, the great hopes entertained for young priests have apparently faded away.<sup>45</sup>

At the outset of their ministry, both because of the passions besetting their youth and because of their more frequent contacts with the world, many serious difficulties usually arise along with new kinds of temptations. And since new priests experience a certain sense of independence and feel that they must do their work in their own way in the ministry entrusted to them, they easily tend to shake off all restraint and, because of their inexperience, can fall into numerous errors and failings which may rightly be feared to lead to deplorable defections. This is why young priests sometimes think they must act on their own and introduce many reforms, disregarding the methods and systems of older priests. Lastly, they frequently are either left without any fruitful occupation or else are overloaded with self-assigned work or work which has been given to them by their superiors, not without danger to their spiritual life.

### 47. The Danger Of The "Heresy Of Action"

On this spiritual danger Pope Pius XII, of venerable memory, has warned us in the following most serious words: "We cannot refrain from expressing Our concern and Our anxiety for those who, because of special circumstances of our day and age, have too frequently so engulfed themselves in a whirl of external activity as to neglect the first duty of priests, that is to say, procuring their own personal sanctification. We have already publicly stated (cf. A.A.S., 36 [1944] — 239, Letter Cum proxime exeat) that 'those men must be recalled to the right path who rashly hold that man can be saved by what is rightly and deservedly called the "heresy of action," that kind of action, We say, which is not based on the assistance of Divine Grace and does not make constant use of the necessary means for the pursuit of sanctity provided by Jesus Christ.'" <sup>46</sup>

### 48. The Danger Of Imitating Worldly Conduct

It happens that the sacred ministry, which should be an instrument for personal sanctification, at times becomes for some people, through their own fault, an occasion for relaxation of discipline and harm to their religious spirit. Not rarely in the exercise of this ministry religious priests adopt the habits of people in the world in speech, conduct, and comportment; they violate poverty through uncontrolled use of material things; they lose esteem for regular discipline and the exercises of piety through prolonged absence from their religious house. Such priests quickly go seeking outside their religious house activities, which provide stable and permanent work in order to have a pretext for withdrawing from religious discipline.

### 49. Young Priests Should Be Introduced Into The Ministry Gradually Under The Direction Of An

## Experienced Guide

Superiors will forestall these difficulties if, in the first place, they effectively put into practice the excellent advice, based on experience, of the Statuta Generalia, art. 51, namely: that "the young priest should not be regarded as definitively formed and put to the test in his religious and apostolic life until, after the completion of about his thirtieth year and through personal contact with the ministry," he has rounded out his formation. In the meantime, according to the directives contained in the aforementioned exhortation of Pope Pius XII,<sup>47</sup> young priests should be introduced gradually into the apostolic ministry, safeguarded with wise and watchful care, and paternally directed in their activities. For this reason, contact with the world should not be either abrupt, frequent, or awkward; rather it should be moderate, humble, and gracious while the young priests devote themselves to study and prayer under the direction of a skilled spiritual director and, as far as possible, the guidance of some other experienced priest assigned to assist them. For "just as long periods of time are necessary for oak trees to put down solid roots, in the same way long-standing patience is always required for the formation of a man of God.

Consequently, restraints should be placed on the generous self-assurance of youth whereby they would be plunged into activity before their time, since undue haste in activity scatters rather than builds, and is both for him who indulges in it and for the apostolic ministry itself a source of harm.<sup>48</sup>

### 50. Young Priests Should Not Be Assigned To Small Houses; Interest In Those Who Are Absent

As a general rule, young priests should not be assigned to small houses but should rather be assigned where religious discipline is easily reconciled with moderate exercise of the apostolate and where the prescriptions of the preceding article can be conveniently complied with.

In addition, superiors should see to it that the aforesaid priests do not spend unduly long periods away from their religious house and, in every case, that they return to the community for the monthly day of recollection and for their retreat.

Finally, they shall exercise special vigilance over those who are absent from the religious house in what concerns their life, conduct, comportment, and the use and administration of temporal goods.<sup>49</sup>

### 51. Vacations With Relatives, At Spas And Other Worldly Centers

Superiors should not allow religious priests to spend long periods with relatives or friends for vacation or rest since this practice causes surprise to people of the world and becomes a source of criticism among their fellow-religious. Nor for purposes of health should they be permitted to make frequent visits to the homes of relatives nor given easy access to spas and other public places, which are indeed places for convalescence but are likewise centers of unrestrained and worldly satisfactions, contrary to religious decorum and spirit. If there be question of sojourns at beaches or if religious must spend time outside their house at warm springs, "they should carefully conform to the prescriptions laid down by local Ordinaries."<sup>50</sup> For the rest, the directives enumerated by this Sacred Congregation for Religious for superiors general<sup>51</sup> on the frequentation of spas are confirmed and once again it is recommended that religious houses be located in healthful climates where those in need of rest and treatment may occupy themselves and at the same time live their religious life.

## The Reading Of This Instruction

52. It is of the greatest importance for the Church that the criteria and directives here set down should,

first of all, be known and that they should be kept in mind and constantly put into practice. It is no less important that there should be a uniform policy in all the states of perfection and, especially, that within the same institute there should be concerted action on the part of all those dedicated to the training of youth.

Wherefore, let superiors see to it that at the beginning of each school year, in place of the Instruction *Quantum Religiones*, this Instruction be read or at least summarized before the superiors, masters, spiritual prefects and their assistants, confessors, and professors, as well as in monastic, general, and provincial councils.

At the same time there should be read or made known to the young candidates the prescriptions which touch them directly, such as those referring to freedom and the conditions to be complied with in embracing the religious and clerical life, the sworn declaration mentioned in n. 42, and other similar provisions.

By the faithful observance of all these directives, the task of investigating the canonical fitness of candidates for the state of perfection and Sacred Orders will meet with success; those who are not fit will be barred in time and at the very outset, and only those worthy and fit will be admitted to Sacred Orders. These, in turn, properly instructed and trained, will effectively promote the glory of God and the salvation of souls to the honor of the Church and the state of evangelical perfection.

In the audience graciously granted on 23 January, 1961, to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious, our Holy Father, Pope John XXIII, deigned to approve this Instruction and ordered that it be communicated to superiors of institutes of evangelical perfection.

Rome, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the year 1961.

S.C. Rel., 2 Feb., 1961; translated from the original Latin text; references to English versions were, of course, entered by us.

[Note: Although this Instruction was not published in AAS or any other public form but was privately circulated, it is, nevertheless, referred to by the S. C. Rel. itself as "a matter of public law" (cf. below: S. C. Rel., 28 April, 1961).]

## NOTES

1. AAS 24 (1932) -74 -81; *Enchiridion de Statibus Perfectionis*, Rome, 1949, n. 363, pp. 471-479. Cf. also the Instruction *Illud saepius*, *De Qualitatibus recipiendorum*, 15 August, 1915, in *Enchiridion de Stat. Perf.*, n. 286, pp. 340-344. English version of *Quantum Religiones* in *Canon Law Digest*, 1, pp. 473-482.
2. AAS 28 (1936)-5-533; *Ench. de Stat. Perf.*, n. 367, 481-521.
3. AAS 42 (1950)-657-702.
4. AAS 46 (1954)-161-191.
5. AAS 31 (1939)-245-251; *Ench. de Stat. Perf.*, n. 373, pp. 530-537; *Canon Law Digest*, 2, pp. 427-433.
6. AAS 50 (1958) 153-161; *Canon Law Digest*, 5, pp. 365-374.

7. Cf. the doctrinal section in AAS 48 (1956) 354-365. The Statuta Generalia appended to this same Apostolic Constitution were printed and promulgated separately from the AAS. The references in the Instruction are to the second edition published under the direction of the Sacred Congregation for Religious. English version of doctrinal section in Canon Law Digest, 4, pp. 169-182; English version of the Statuta is available from the Catholic University of America Press.

8. These documents of Pope John XXIII can be consulted in AAS 52 (1960)-179-309, and in the Prima Romana Synodus, A.D. 1960, Vatican Press.

8a. English version in Canon Law Digest, 4, pp. 303-315.

8b. Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 308.

9. Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 286, p. 341.

10. Allocution of Pius XI to the General Chapter of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 14 September, 1932. Allocution of Pius XII to the superiors General, 11 February, 1958, in AAS 50 (1958)-160; Canon Law Digest, 5, p. 373.

11. John XXIII, allocution of 28 January, 1960, to the clerical students of the Diocese of Rome or residing in Rome, in AAS 52 (1960)-263; English version in The Pope Speaks, 6 (1960)-364. Prima Romana Synodus, p. 436. Cf. Pius XI, encyclical Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, AAS 28 (1936)-44; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367, p. 513.

12. Apostolic Const. Sedes Sapientiae, nn. 12-13; Canon Law Digest, 4, P. 173.

13. Stat. Gen., art. 34, § 2, 1°.

14. Ibid., n. 2°.

15. Pius XI, Encyclical Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, AAS 28 (1936) Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367, p. 513.

16. Pius XI, *ibid.*, AAS 28 (1936)-41; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367; p. 511. Cf. also the Encyclical Sacra Virginitas, AAS 46 (1954)-180-181.

17. Prima Romana Synodus, 484, § 3.

18. Cf. Prima Romana Synodus, 477.

19. Cf. Stat. Gen., art. 28, § 3, 1°.

20. Pius XI, Encyc. Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, AAS 28 (1936)-39; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367, pp. 509-510.

21. Cf. canons 971; 542, 1°; 572, § 1, 4°; 2352.

22. St. Pius X, Apostolic letter, Cum primum, 4 Aug., 1913, in AAS, 5 (1913)-388; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 279, p. 331.

23. Pius XI, Encyc. Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, 28 (1936)-39; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367, p. 510.

24. Circular Letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, n. 5; Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 311.
25. Ibid., n. 6; Canon Law Digest, loc. Cit.
26. Stat. Gen., art. 32, §3. Cf. Prima Romana Synodus, 467, §2. Circular Letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, n. 7; Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 311.
27. Cf. Stat. Gen., art. 39, §1, 1°.
28. Pius XII, Exhort. Menti Nostrae, AAS 42 (1950)-690-691; cf. Encyc. Sacra virginitas, AAS 46 (1954)-164, 170, 174, 179, 182.
29. Pius XI, Encyc. Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, AAS 28 (1936)-37; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 367, p. 508.
30. Cf. Stat. Gen., art. 51.
31. Pius XII, Exhort. Menti Nostrae, AAS 42 (1950)-673.
32. Leo XIII, Letter Testem benevolentiae, 12 Jan., 1899, in Acta Leonis XIII, vol. XIX, pp. 15-16.
33. Pius XII, Apost. Const. Sedes Sapientiae, n. 21; cf. also Pius XII, Alloc. Haud Mediocri, 11 Feb., 1958, to superiors general resident in Rome, AAS 50 (1958)-153 ff. Cf. respectively Canon Law Digest, 4, pp. 175-176; 5, pp. 365 ff.
34. Cf. Sacred Congregation for Religious, Letter to the Superiors General of the Institutes of Perfection on the use of radio and television, 6 August, 1957; Canon Law Digest, 4, pp. 206-209.
35. Cf. Alloc. of Pius XII, Haud Mediocri, as quoted above in note 33; Alloc. to the Superiors General, 11 Feb., 1958, in AAS 50 (1958)-156; Canon Law Digest, 5, p. 368.
36. Quotations from John XXIII and Pius XII respectively: John XXIII, Alloc. to the ecclesiastical students in Rome, AAS 52 (1960)-264; The Pope Speaks, 6 (1960)-364; Prima Romana Synodus, p. 437; Pius XII, Alloc. to the Society of Jesus assembled in General Congregation, 10 Sept., 1957, in AAS 49 (1957)-808; The Pope Speaks, 4 (1957-58)-449.
37. Pius XII, Apost. Const. Sedes Sapientiae, n. 23; Canon Law Digest, 4, p. 176; also his Allocution to Superiors General, 11 Feb., 1958, in AAS 50 (1958)-157; Canon Law Digest, 5, p. 370. Cf. Stat. Gen., art. 37; 40, §2, 1°, 2°, 3.
38. Cf. can. 973, § 1; Sacred Congregation for Religious, Instruction Quantum Religiones, 1 Dec., 1931, in AAS 24 (1932)-79; Ench. de Stat. Perf; n. 363, p. 477; Canon Law Digest, 1, pp. 479-80.
39. Cf. can. 973, § 1 and can. 1357, § 2.
40. Cf. Stat. Gen., art 28, § 2, 3°, 9°, 10°, and the Instruction Quantum Religiones, n.14, as quoted above in note 38.
41. Cf. Stat. Gen., art. 8, § 1, 2°; Sacred Congregation for Religious, Instruction Quantum Religiones, n. 15, in AAS 24 (1932)-80; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 363, p. 478; Canon Law Digest, 1, p. 480.

42. Sacred Congregation for Religious, Instruction Quantum Religiones, n. 16; Canon Law Digest, 1, pp. 480-481.
43. Ibid., n. 17; Canon Law Digest, 1, p. 481.
44. Ibid., n. 20; Canon Law Digest, 1, p. 482.
45. Pius XII, Exhort. Menti Nostrae, AAS 42 (1950)-692. Cf. also the Instruction Quantum Religiones, n. 10; Canon Law Digest, 1, p. 478.
46. Pius XII, Exhort. Menti Nostrae, AAS 42 (1950)-677.
47. Ibid., p. 692.
48. Pius XII, Alloc. Quamvis Inquieti, 17 Sept., 1946, in AAS 38 (1946) -383; Ench. de Stat. Perf., n. 385, p. 574.
49. Cf. the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for Religious on religious military chaplains, in AAS 47 (1955)-93-97, and the decree on religious in military service, especially articles IV and V, 30 July, 1957, in AAS 49 (1957)-871-874. For these documents respectively, see Canon Law Digest, 4, pp. 152-157; 90-93.
50. Cf. Prima Romana Synodus, 87.
51. Sacred Congregation for Religious, Circular Letter of 15 July, 1926; Canon Law Digest, 3, p. 216.