

Presentation to the World Conference of the Secular Institutes (CMIS)

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Formation To Candidates To Priesthood In Voluntas Dei Institute

1. According to the Decree of Priestly Formation “*Optatam Totius*”, the VOLUNTAS DEI INSTITUTE also has a major seminary which includes philosophical and theological studies, as well as spiritual accompaniment with a specific spiritual director. We, the Secular Institute Voluntas Dei, give our formation *in the midst of the world* with all the challenges and characteristics it comprises.

2. As of Hebrew 5, 1:

Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

The men are chosen from the men of the world in order to act on behalf of those men. It cannot be the formation apart from the humanity that exists and the radical challenges that humanity faces every day.

According to Fr. Parent, our Founder, the *Word of God*, the *Constitutions* and the *signs of the time* are the basic elements to learn and to acquire during the formation. Keeping this in mind, the formation of seminarians and priests is done firstly with those elements in our Institute.

3. The specificity of our Institute, as you all know, is that we have *a variety of persons composing it*: we have priests, we have celibate laymen, we have married couples, and last but not least, we have spiritually affiliated persons.

Our formation is given by the expertise from our own Institute, not only by priests but also by consecrated lay persons. Even in certain parts of the world, the spiritual accompanying person of a seminarian is a *committed married person*. The Institute believes that the vocation to priesthood starts from a family and if he is formed by a family surrounding, he receives a whole and healthy, human and spiritual growth which will help him to serve better in the midst of the world.

4. **Therefore, we underline our formation as follows:**

- First, we analyse:
 - A. “Is he called to the *presbyteral ministry*?”
 - B. Is he called to *secular consecration*?
 - C. Is he called to serve the *Voluntas Dei Institute*?

- If we found everything satisfactory, then we proceed further with :
 - a) *human formation*:
 - i) Self knowledge
 - ii) Openness to others
 - iii) Maturity
 - iv) Growth towards God

 - b) *Spiritual Formation*:
 - i) Understanding the *grace of baptism*: configuration with God to become *priest, king and prophet* (1P2, 5).
 - ii) Living accordingly to the *555 spirituality*
 - iii) Conforming himself to the *will of God*

 - c) *Intellectual, pastoral and missionary formation*:
 - i) The candidate should acquire the necessary knowledge to become priest (i.e. philosophy, theology, as well as other fields necessary for his pastoral and missionary work).

 - ii) As an Institute, we give the formation to the *pastoral attitudes*:
 - a. Capacity in welcoming and listening.
 - b. Capacity of dialogue
 - c. Capacity to gather everyone together
 - d. Capacity to animate and awaken the charisma of groups and individuals.

 - iii) Formation to acquire a *missionary spirit*:
 - a. Understanding the Mission of the Church
 - b. Understanding the VDEI Mission (everywhere where Christ has its rights)

 - iv) *Discernment of signs of time* in a way that is understood through permanent formation. The candidate or priest is always in constant “self-updating” accordingly to these signs. (For instance, in a world filled with technology).

d) Formation to be the *agents*:

- i) They are the *agents or instruments of the Holy Spirit*, letting the H. Spirit express himself through them.
- ii) They are the *agents of the Institute* in the sense that they express the spirit of the Institute. First, they are V. Dei, then, they are priests serving the Church with the colour of the V. Dei Institute.
- iii) They are agents of the *Christian Community*.

e) Formation to *secular consecration*:

We also see that everyone is challenged by the secular consecration, before they become priests:

- i) They are going to be in the heart of the world without belonging to the world (*Perfectae Caritatis* no 10).
- ii) Mingling the cultures and unifying people.
- iii) Creating peace and fraternity in Jesus-Christ.

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- 1) When a *diocesan priest* enters the Institute, we see to it that the above formation is being given to the priest during the time of the incorporation into the Institute, before we give the final incorporation (Stability).
- 2) When a *religious priest* or *priest from another Secular Institute* wants to transfer himself into our Institute, we follow the same steps during the transfer, before the final incorporation (Stability).