

Monika Menke

Young People at Present and Their Preparation for Religious Life

Ecumeny and Law 5, 217-234

2017

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

MONIKA MENKE
Palacký University, Olomouc

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Keywords: young people, formation, pastoral care of vocations, consecrated life, religious institutes, pre-novitiate, novitiate, Order of Preachers, Dominican Brethren, Dominican Nuns

Introduction

Life with God in the Church has been performed in various forms. Religious life is one of the forms of vocation from God, in which a religious person consecrates himself/herself to God and follows Christ in a radical way, particularly through publicly adopted commitments, religious professions of poverty, chastity and obedience. It is a specific kind of dedication that has its roots in baptismal consecration and is a superior expression of it. The testimony of consecrated persons consists in primarily the affirmation of the primacy of God in human life and in the complete dedication and commitment of a religious in the service of love.¹ I would like to pursue this subject within the confines of the Canon Law (which I would like to emphasize) and of the pastoral theology: the formation of contemporary youth for their religious vocations. This is primarily the formation of the personality leading to maturity for a lifetime decision enshrined in family education and in the consequential pastoral

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II: *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata on the Consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the World* (25.03.1996) [hereafter: VC], n. 85.

care of vocations in the dioceses. A specific type is then the pastoral care of vocations in religious institutes. This will be exemplified with the example of initial formation in the Czech province of the Order of Preachers, in the case of the Dominican Brethren and of the Contemplative Nuns.

1. Vocation as a gift and a result of personal decisions (term, norms)

Each person seeks out a meaningful path in life. This involves, on the one hand, *the vocation* for a certain form of life, this being God's gift and, on the other hand, the adherence and response of a person to a particular way of vocation of God. There is nothing such as a worse or better vocation because all of them arise from a universal call to holiness² and there are only particular ways of implementation of this vocation. The very notion of vocation to consecrated life is extremely ambiguous as there are many forms of consecrated life: both individual (consecrated virgins, hermits, etc.) and social (religious institutes, secular institutes, etc.). The radicalism of the Gospel is then legally expressed with a religious profession (*professio*) of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. Saint John Paul II said about them that these professions adopt the characteristics of Jesus himself, the unique and permanent form, visible in the world.³

Just as with preparation for marriage, preparation for another way of dedication of life is one of the fundamental tasks of the Church. CIC of 1917 included provisions for the admission of members and for postulates in can. 539—541.⁴ Decree of the Second Vatican Council *Perfectae Caritatis* regulating formation states that the renewal of religious institutes primarily depends upon the institution of its members,⁵ and therefore along

² Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen gentium* [hereafter: LG], n. 40

³ Cf. VC n. 1.

⁴ The period of the postulate for laity candidates should take six months in the religious institutes with permanent profess, the religious institutes with temporal profess shall be governed upon the statutes. The postulate was to be held in the religious house, preferably in the novitiate house under the guidance of an experienced religious person. The candidates should wear simple clothes, different from the clothing of novices and before entering the novitiate they should pass at least an eight-day long exercise. The postulants of the monasteries of nuns are also bound by the duty of cloister seclusion.

⁵ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II: *Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life Perfectae Caritatis* [28 X 1965] [hereafter: PC], n. 18.

with other changes required by the council, the formative plans of individual religious institutes have been gradually adapted as well. The basic principles for renewal of the formation were provided by the instruction of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes *Renovationis causam* of 1969.⁶ The prenovitiate formation was specifically emphasized in the instruction of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Associations of Apostolic life *Potissimum institutioni* of 1990,⁷ in particular in nos. 42—44. The Code of Canon Law does not supply the area of initial formation in any details, it does not deal the time of postulate, but only states the conditions of valid and permitted admission into a religious institute in can. 641—661. Only can. 642 speaks of the essential qualities of the candidate (they should be of the required age, health, suitable personality and characteristics indicative of sufficient maturity for life in the community).⁸ More detailed regulations are then included in the actual laws of the individual religious and secular institutes.

2. Specifics of religious life

One must find one's vocation in life and have at least a basic knowledge of the identity of a particular vocation. There is consequently a need that the ones responsible for pastoral care of vocations have this required knowledge and the diocesan priests and practicing laymen to a basic extent too. The vocation to the religious life can be characterized by the following signs: 1) the desire for a specific consecration to God through the Gospel counsels as a response to a vocation from God, 2) the inclination to live a particular life form in the community, 3) in the case of apostolic institutes also by the availability, interest in a particular apostolate of the community.⁹ Religious life is specific in several dimensions:

⁶ SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO RELIGIOSIS ET INSTITUTIS SAECULARIBUS: *Instructio Renovationis causam de accomodata renovatione institutionis ad vitam religiosam ducendam* (6.01.1969) AAS 61 (1969) pp. 103—120.

⁷ CONGREGATIO PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSACRATAE ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE: *Instructio Potissimum institutioni de institutione in religiosis institutionis* (2.02.1990) AAS 82 (1990) [hereafter: PI], pp. 470—532: Unlike the postulate in CIC of 1917 the prenovitiate formation does not have to take place in a religious house and its form is governed by the rights of the institute itself.

⁸ Cf. CIC, can. 642.

⁹ Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND FOR SECULAR INSTITUTES: *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life as applied to Institutes dedicated to Works of the Apostolate* (31.05.1983) [hereafter: EE], n. 4.

the radicalism in the pursuit of perfection – with the profession, the religious has the duty to carry out what is Gospel advice for others.¹⁰ Also important are the various gifts by which the life of Jesus Christ is represented in the Church, especially by continence (virginity or celibacy) for the Kingdom of God.¹¹ The religious life is also an eschatological sign for all Christians thanks to both his community and public witness.¹² Prior to the Second Vatican Council, the term *status perfectionis acquirendae* was used in the Church to mark the religious state.¹³ The importance placed by the Council on the universal call to holiness also shifted the emphasis in this case and replaced it with the expression *consecratio*. The term *vita consecrata* is currently used for the religious state. Stability, which used to be expressed by the term *status*, is now expressed by characterizing this situation as *stabilis vivendi forma*.¹⁴ This stability has been provided by the adoption of the Gospel counsels in the profession (*professio consiliorum evangelicorum*) and can take various forms, the basic form is *per vota publica*. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* for religious dedication uses the term *totaliter mancipatur*,¹⁵ that is, the entire human person with everything that belongs to it.¹⁶ God's act with which God calls to man is in first place, and in the act of the person's response to this call is in second place. The legal definition of can. 573 uses the somewhat weaker term *totaliter dedicantur*. The legislature then summarizes the theological elements of the consecrated life in the same canon, these being consecration, the acceptance of the obligations of the Gospel counsels, common life (in the case of religious institutes in the community). Characteristic canonical-legal elements are then: canonical recognition (establishment) by the competent ecclesiastical authority, commitment of the Gospel counsels in the manner legally recognized by the Church (public professions) and proper legislation of the Institute itself (*ius proprium*).¹⁷

¹⁰ Cf. VC, n. 15.

¹¹ Cf. LG, n. 42.

¹² Cf. LG n. 44.

¹³ The term is also contained in LG n. 4 (religious institute as *institutum perfectionis*) or S.C, n. 98.

¹⁴ CIC, can. 573 § 1: *Vita consecrata per consiliorum evangelicorum professionem est stabilis vivendi forma qua fideles, Christum sub actione Spiritus Sancti pressius sequentes, Deo summe dilecto totaliter dedicantur ut, in Eius honorem atque Ecclesiae aedificationem mundique salutem novo et peculiari titulo dediti, caritatis perfectionem in servitio Regni Dei consequantur et, praeclarum in Ecclesia signum effecti, caelestem gloriam praenuntient.*

¹⁵ Cf. LG, n. 44.

¹⁶ Cf. *Sth. II—II, q. 186, and q. 7*: For Thomas Aquinas the religious profess is *quasi holocaustum* — complete dedication to God.

¹⁷ Cf. D. ANDRES: *Le forme di vita consecrata*. Roma 2014, p. 30.

3. Formation for the religious vocation as a special form of realization of the baptismal consecration

Religious consecration is a mere development of baptismal consecration (not its negation), it is its improved expression,¹⁸ and leads to service in the heart of the Church (which also implies the need for apostolic operation). The concept of formation (from Latin *formatio*) means to shape, model, form.¹⁹ The period of formation should be a period of acquiring knowledge and experience enabling an individual to answer to the call of God. It is an indisputable right of every institute due to its specificity itself.²⁰ It focuses generally on the overall understanding of the individual: the nature and characteristics, and in particular the ability to take on the demands arising from the religious profession. It specifically focuses not only on an understanding of the gift of the Institute, of its history and its special mission,²¹ but also on an understanding of the life of a Christian and religious asceticism, the practice and observance of the profession and of statutes of the Institute and last but not least, a deeper understanding of Church teaching in the context of fulfilling the mission of the Institute.

I will attempt to describe the preparation for this kind of life dedication *using the analogy of preparation for marriage* (although this division cannot be found in any document) which means dividing it into a remote, proximate and immediate stage. Before discussing the closest practical level, I will attempt to describe at least in general what qualities a candidate for religious life should obtain in the previous periods (or, in the case of a convert, what should occur before the novitiate itself). As

¹⁸ Cf. PC, n. 5; VC, n. 30: *In Ecclesiae traditione religiosa professio existimatur tamquam unica fertilisque baptismalis consecrationis explicatio quatenus eius auxilio arta cum Christo coniunctio, iam Baptismate incohata, per donum enucleatur plenius declaratae atque impletae conformationis per evangelicorum consiliorum professionem. Ulterior haec consecratio propriam induit qualitatem ad priorem quod attinet, cum qua non simplex est consociatio neque necessarius quidam effectus.*

¹⁹ The formater is both the person who forms the other person and (primarily) every person should be a formater to himself/herself to gradually reach the fullness of their baptismal consecration.

²⁰ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE: *Instruction Inter-Institute Collaboration for Formation* (8.07.1998) [hereafter: CF], n. 7: The Heritage of this Institute (*patrimonium instituti*) consists of three elements: the intentions and objectives of the founder (*mens atque propositi fundatorum*) about the character and nature of the Institute, the approval of this way of life by competent authority of the Church and sound traditions of the Institute.

²¹ Cf. CF, n. 10b.

soon as at the time of remote preparation within one's family upbringing, the individual should accept the fact that he/she is a personality with strengths and weaknesses. He/she should accept a certain value system, understand the importance of love and the noble task of marriage and the family and in the context of this positive acceptance consequently the meaning and value of life without marriage (the priesthood or religious life). He or she should gradually become ready for the capacity to make a lifelong decision to a specific form of commitment and the acceptance of this life as an objective fact the center of which is not merely him/her. On this basis, similarly as in the case of proximate preparation (usually at the time of completion of adolescence, the period of pastoral care of the youth) one should accept the specificity of masculinity and femininity, the specificity of marriage as a personal relationship between a man and woman, which is derived from human nature and anchor himself/herself in life with God and in the Church. He or she should realize and accept his/her dignity, his/her particular gifts, his/her emotionality and focus on orientation within the foundation of healthy interpersonal relationships. The individual at this point also gradually improves the ability to love and build interpersonal relationships and deeper ties (not only superficially communicating and sharing information). The maturation of the acceptance of his/her personal identity and his/her spiritual identity (i.e. the Christian one) in the case of persons called to the consecrated life also begins to be connected with the search for religious identity. In this dimension, at this time, such a person should accept the specificity of his/her personal propensity and call to a more exclusive dedication to God and find that this is the path to which the Lord calls him/her and that he/she has at least basic skills in this specific way. At this time, he/she should also look for a specific way of realization of his/her consecration (an individual form of consecrated virginity or one of the social forms in a religious institute, secular institute in new directions and movements, etc.). They usually feel attracted at this time to a particular spirituality and institution, because religious identity takes its form upon the very gifts of the individual institutes. The period of the immediate preparation can be identified with the so-called prenovitiate (postulate), by which begins its own formation in a particular religious institute. It can generally be stated that the time, place and manner of the postulate are governed by the proper law of the institute itself. It may take a different period of time and may take various forms.²²

²² Cf. CONGREGATIO PRO INSTITUTIS VITAE CONSACRATAE ET SOCIETATIBUS VITAE APOSTOLICAE: *Instructio Potissimum institutioni de institutione in religiosis institutionis* (2.02.1990) [hereafter: PI], n. 42, 44. Instructions merely say that this time is necessary and can be extended in accordance with the ability of a particular candidate (and institute). Regard-

3.1. The formation of young people for a profession in a religious institute from the point of view of the diocese

Part of the general pastoral care of vocations in the diocese is the lead of young people to look for paths to religion too. Unlike the preparation for marriage, which has been elaborated and described in detail within the period of the free activity of the Church in the Czech Republic or the formation to the priesthood (which is primarily led in seminaries), the area of formation for religious life has been somewhat neglected.²³ The Czech Republic is also a country with a break in the continuity of religious formation at the time of Communist totalitarianism. This is also a reason why the dioceses cannot always be focused on pastoral care of vocations of youths in this direction and why instead they refer to specific religious institutions. Many diocesan priests also have issues when accompanying the seekers in this way if they do not have any positive personal experience while working with religious men and women in pastoral care. The fact that the religious institutes in the Czech environment, decimated by totalitarianism, have not always been able to provide quality formation of its candidates cannot be concealed. There has been a positive shift, however, even in this area. On the nation-wide level a coordinating national team for the pastoral care of vocations was created the, composed of representatives of CMS (Conference of Major Superiors) and CBC (Czech Bishops' Conference) which prepared in 2011 a document for the pastoral care of vocations in the Czech Republic²⁴ setting out the main lines of this pastoral care. A similar team for the pastoral care of vocations should be established in individual dioceses. Another project aimed generally at those seeking vocation, which was established

ing location, it is recommended that the prenovitiate does not take place (except the communities of contemplative nuns) in the novitiate community of the institute.

²³ Cf. *PI* n. 42, 44. Instructions merely say that this time is necessary and can be extended in accordance with the ability of a particular candidate (and institute). Regarding location, it is recommended that the prenovitiate does not take place (except the communities of contemplative nuns) in the novitiate community of the institute.

²⁴ *Draft of pastoral care of vocation*, op. by: www.fatym.com/download.php?file=01387: The proposal has been inspired by a similar document on the pastoral care of vocation in Slovakia and the document issued after the Congress on vocation to priesthood and consecrated life in Europe (Rome, 5th to 10th May 1997) by the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life called the New Vocations for New Europe (Czech translation: Czech Bishops' Conference Secretariat, Prague, no. 38 of Red series of documents).

in 2006, was the website for pastoral care of vocations,²⁵ where a team of priests, religious and laity helps to target seekers in this area through articles, offerings of events, exercises, meetings and contacts. The Czech Bishops' Conference also established the Commission for the pastoral care of vocations (Josef Kajnek is currently the Chairman Bishop), which cooperates with the Conference of the Superiors of Male and Female Religious Institutes in the Czech Republic.

There was a specific project in the Olomouc Archdiocese as part of the Year of Consecrated Life enounced by Pope Francis on 30 November 2014 and lasting until November 2015. The Center for Youth of the Olomouc Archdiocese prepared a thematic series of videos entitled *The Year of Consecrated Life* in which they presented religious orders and societies, as well as certain specific ways of experiencing consecration in the Church. The first part was focused on the topic of holiness and was created in cooperation with Olomouc Dominicans. It was followed by the topics of joy (the Community of the Beatitudes), gifts (the Capuchins), poverty (the Poor Clares-Capuchins), education (the Jesuits), vocation (the Community of the Sisters of Jesus), (non-)triviality (the Premonstratensians), service (the Franciscans — Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary), flexibility (the Salesians), fidelity (the Carmelite Sisters), truthfulness (the Dominican Sisters), accompaniment (the Sisters of St. Vincent), praise (the Marian of the Immaculate Conception) and identity (the Trappists). The last part was a video related to the pilgrimage of gratitude for vocation in August 2015 at Velehrad. In this documentary, a 15-series cycle, specific religious men and women presented their way of life and dedication to service. The cycle was met with great enthusiasm by youth and facilitated closer insight into the reality, value and importance of religious life even in the secularized Czech environment at present.

3.2. The formation of youth towards a vocation in a religious institute by religious orders in general

Individual religious institutes have been developing their own educational and formative activities both before entering the institute and after entering the novitiate. They have their proper regulations governing this area, contact persons and their own formatters. It is often emphasized

²⁵ See: www.hledampovolani.cz. The web is operated by the pastoral center of the Prague archbishopric.

that apart from God's activity addressing specific candidates for religious life, the primary testimony of life is usually the apostolate of each religious and each community. *Prenovitiate* (*postulate*)²⁶ is the stage of religious formation, which should lead to sufficient readiness for a particular candidate for admission to the novitiate. CIC of 1917 described in three canons the time, place and apparel during this period, however, it has not commented on the goals.²⁷ CIC of 1983 does not address these questions related to the time before the novitiate. It only comments on it indirectly in can. 597²⁸ and 642,²⁹ on the need for due preparation, maturity and attention of the superiors to candidates for religious life. The instruction *Potissimum institutioni* of 1990 in its fifth part addresses these current issues of religious formation. It describes the situation for young people (both the positive and negative aspects, especially in nos. 86—89) in detail, seeking out common features as the basis for directing the initial formation. The specific features for young people in the individual local churches are also worth mentioning.³⁰ The development of youth is extremely fast and appropriate maturity (in the area of faith, as well as in areas of psychology or emotional maturity) does not correspond to it. A religious vocation requires a sufficient degree of such maturity and the prenovitiate should help this or, as the case may be, provide the missing attributes.³¹ A designated religious formator, who is to cooperate with the novice master, takes care of the candidates.³² The contents

²⁶ There cannot be found a unified term for this stage. The postulate is an older term, instructions *PI* (1990) uses the term prenovitiate.

²⁷ Cf. *CIC of 1917* can. 539—541.

²⁸ *CIC*, can. 597: Section (§) 1: *In vitae consecratae institutum admitti potest quilibet catholicus, recta intentione praeditus, qui qualitates habeat iure universali et proprio requisitas nulloque detineatur impedimento.* Section (§) 2. *Nemo admitti potest sine congrua praeparatione.*

²⁹ *CIC*, can. 642: *Superiores vigilanti cura eos tantum admittant qui, praeter aetatem requisitam, habeant valetudinem, aptam indolem et sufficientes maturitatis qualitates ad vitam instituti propriam amplectendam; quae valetudo, indoles et maturitas comprobentur adhibitis etiam, si opus fuerit, peritis, firmo praescripto can. 220.*

³⁰ For example in the Czech Republic and Poland, the experience of totalitarian communism, after its fall and liberalization of society, as well as in the value area, the effects of particular movements and Church communities specific for the given region and so on.

³¹ Cf. W. KIWIOR: "Etapy řeholní formace." In: *Řeholní formace*. Olomouc 2002, pp. 93—166. The author (pp. 100—102) discusses the specific elements of human formation (natural virtues, discipline and beauty of ordinary human values, the right motivation, freedom to make decisions) and the formation of a certain degree of religious Christian maturity, the experience of prayer, common life, liturgy, sacraments) which should be supplemented during the time of the prenovitiate.

³² Cf. *PI*, n. 44.

of the prenovitiate are regulated by the internal regulations of individual religious institutes. In general, this period is characterized by personalized formation, the environment and elements guaranteeing the free choice of the candidate (it should not be an extended novitiate), using appropriate spiritual and educational resources (including the possible assistance of a psychologist) and the verification of the exigencies, which a candidate for entry into the novitiate has to meet, both the canonical-legal and the personal ability to live in a particular institute.³³

The canonical expectations are as follows:³⁴ the candidate has to be a Catholic, of a suitable age, health, nature and personality and sufficiently mature. He or she has to be older than 17 and cannot be a spouse in a marriage (*coniux durante matrimonio*), or a candidate who is already bound by a sacred commitment to an Institute of Consecrated Life or incorporated in a Society of Apostolic Life. He or she must not enter the institute through coercion, grave fear or fraud and must not conceal his/her incorporation into the Institute of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life. He/she has to submit to a certificate of baptism, confirmation and single status. If the candidate or cleric has been admitted to another institute or seminary, the testimony of the competent ordinary or the major superior or rector of the seminary is required. Additional impediments causing invalid admission to the novitiate can be established by the proper law of institute itself.³⁵

3.3. Specific examples of prenovitiate formation in the Czech Dominican Province

The Dominican Brethren

The last provincial chapter of the Czech Dominican Province regarding initial formation of its brothers stated that the prenovitiate should include at least 10 week-end meetings with each candidate to the order. The reason for this regulation is not in order to delaying the entrance but

³³ Cf. W. KIWIOR: “Etapy řeholní formace,”... pp. 106—107.

³⁴ Cf. *CIC*, can. 597, 643, 645.

³⁵ In practice, a candidate usually fills in a questionnaire to enter a religious institute providing general personal data, family data and specific personal data (physical and mental health, including illness and addictions, studies, education, work experience, social relations and hobbies, Christian life, professional growth, etc.). At the same time, addresses of two impartial persons who would be able to verify these data are also required.

in order to obtain a better mutual knowledge of the candidate and the brethren.³⁶ This regulation should also be reflected in the schedule of formation and study of the Czech Dominican Province,³⁷ which defines the prenovitiate basically. The current working materials of the Novice Master and the formatters (material for internal use) specify it in detail.³⁸ These documents specify the requirements of Church law and of the documents of the order according to the possibilities of the Czech Dominican Province. Admission to the novitiate is directed in a way that after a year of novitiate the brothers who will study after the professions can begin a standard academic year. The working procedure with the candidates begins about a year before the stated time of the beginning of the novitiate. The development of the activities and the seeking out of ways to bring the Dominican religious life closer to young people (e.g. a suitable type of information in the media) does not depend only on the promoter for the profession, but also on the individual monasteries and brethren.³⁹ The candidate is accepted to the novitiate by the promoter for the vocation (in the case of applicants older than 40 years of age, the Formative Board will decide on their acceptance upon a proposal from the promoter for vocations). Before anything is promised to the interested person by the order, he meets the promoter of the vocation. At the meeting they clarify the basic facts, among others: a) the motive and freedom of choice of life in the order; b) the life of faith (the time since conversion, regular sacramental life, the status of Christian formation); c) age and education; d) employment or method of financial security; e) family background, relationships, the existence of any obligations, etc.⁴⁰ The promoter consequently communicates in writing the opinion on the vocation to the candidate: either he is told that he will be accepted into the prenovitiate of the novitiate together with an introduction to its course or a decision is made to postpone the acceptance (showing specific reasons). If the candidate does not comply with the conditions completely and there is no indication of hope for a change, the promoter of the vocation should communicate this fact in writing so that the candidate would not be kept in false expectation and can continue to explore his place in life.⁴¹ The first months of the

³⁶ CZECH DOMINICAN PROVINCE: *Acts of the Provincial Chapter of CDP*. Prague 2014, n. 109.

³⁷ CZECH DOMINICAN PROVINCE: *Schedule on formation and studies of CDP*. Prague 2006. The document describes the entire period of formation, not only the initial one [hereafter: SFS].

³⁸ Furthermore CZECH DOMINICAN PROVINCE: *Internal guidelines for prenovitiate and novitiate of CDP*. Olomouc 2011.

³⁹ Cf. SFS, n. 5.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Internal guidelines for prenovitiate and novitiate of CDP*, II, p. 6.

⁴¹ Cf. *Internal guidelines for prenovitiate and novitiate of CDP*, II, p. 6.

prenovitiate are filled primarily by personal interviews between the promoter and the candidate. The candidates spend one weekend each month in a monastery. Before entering the novitiate, the candidates are supposed to be in a monastery for at least one month or a maximum of three months. It should preferably be a larger monastery, where the promoter of the vocation resides. The candidates should participate in the divine services of the monastery and under the guidance of the promoter should discuss specific set topics.⁴² *The internal guidelines for the prenovitiate and novitiate of CDP* also contain important terms and dates for this period, the list of documents required for admission to the order, questions for the candidate to be answered in writing, a contact for the person with whom the promoter may arrange provision of a psychological personality examination of the candidate, a draft plan of the prenovitiate meetings and if the stay in a monastery and a proposal for recommended literature for this period.

The Dominican Nuns (the Znojmo Monastery)

This convent of contemplative Dominican Nuns has developed its own formation-study curriculum (for the entire formation, both the initial and ongoing one).⁴³ The curriculum begins with this quote: “The formation of cloister nuns has been aimed at preparing a person for total consecration to God while following Christ in a way of life focused solely on contemplation in accordance with the proper special mission in the Church.”⁴⁴ The initial contact period here is called a candidacy there. At the beginning, the interested person for this way of life arrives for a certain period of time (e.g. a weekend) based on their possibilities and the possibilities of the monastery. The candidate usually has conversations with the nuns at this time, especially with the prioress or a designated nun and based on the circumstances the psychological tests are held. The study formation is therefore focused on personal human and Christian formation, which also enables easy continuity in the event that the candidate decides not to continue in the formation in the monastery of Dominican nuns. It also seeks to contribute to the necessary elementary knowledge

⁴² Cf. *SFS*, n. 6 and n. 8. These topics are updated regularly and they cover the following areas: spiritual life, religious life, apostolate, liturgy, salvation history, introduction to faith. During the long-term stay in the monastery, the candidates to the priesthood also work manually and learn French because students of CDP are currently formed in France.

⁴³ MONASTERY OF NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS OF ZNOJMO: *Formation-study program of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers in the monastery of St. Cross Znojmo (Ratio institutionis)*. Znojmo 2008 [hereafter: FSPN]. The document is supplemented by a clear table scheduling the content of each stage.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Verbi sponsa*, n. 22.

of Dominican specifics to allow for a responsible decision on the part of the candidates.⁴⁵ After this period of time, she comes home and if she is interested, is accepted into the prenovitiate (postulate). The aim of the postulate is to consequently recognize the personal vocation to the consecrated life in the contemplative convent, including the gradual separation from a secular way of life and the acquisition of basic habits of religious life.⁴⁶ The community should be allowed to form a deeper understanding of the skills and behavior of the postulant, including the level of her religious life. The formation has therefore been specifically focused on a basic knowledge of consecrated life in a contemplative religious community and a basic introduction to the Dominican charism. An emphasis is placed on completion of Christian formation according the conditions of a particular candidate. It should also facilitate the continuity in the event that the postulant decides for another form of consecrated life or decides to return to the world. It also seems appropriate for the postulate to start learning the Latin language and also allows for the use of a modern language, those foundations had been acquired by the candidate thus far.⁴⁷

Part of the formation curriculum is a list of topics and recommended reading for the period of the candidacy and postulate. The initial formation should be aimed at achieving sufficient autonomy for life in religious commitments, while the ongoing formation is supposed to develop this way of life further.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Cf. *FSPN*, n. 1.1 The period of the candidature aims to achieving sufficient personal and Christian maturity in the areas of prayer (the essence of prayer, basic types of prayer, personal and common prayer), liturgy (introduction to the nature of liturgy and liturgy of hours), consecrated life (the fact of personal vocation, basic life vocation: consecrated life, marriage, solitary life, Dominican emphases, monastic tradition), history of the Order (contemporary circumstances of founding of the Order, basic information about St. Dominic), basic knowledge of religion.

⁴⁶ In the area of postulate, the topics are related to personal vocation. The area of prayer is developed in terms of understanding the nature of contemplative prayer, community character of liturgical and contemplative prayer. In the area of liturgy continues the introduction to the liturgy of the hours, gestures and words, especially in the Dominican tradition, liturgical hymns. Knowledge in the area of consecrated life develops the evangelical basis and the basic requirements of this lifestyle, nature of the Dominican common life, the contemplative dimension, the relationship of consecrated life and sexuality (including the necessary foundations of psychology). The history of the Order is focused on the charism of St. Dominic and the great Dominican saints. A biblical study informs about the basic information regarding the Holy Scripture and introduce to *lectio divina*. According to individual needs, religious knowledge, especially the Catechism, can be supplemented further; continuing the study of Latin and a modern language.

⁴⁷ Cf. *FSPN*, n. 1.2. The plan of study formation conceived in this way in the postulate usually requires at least six months, if necessary the period of the postulate is extended, but not more than by other six months.

⁴⁸ Cf. *PI*, n. 67.

Final evaluation

The statistical data on the state of candidates for religious life can finally be summarized. There were 1,120 religious sisters and nuns and 689 religious brethren and monks in the Czech Republic as of 1st January 2016, 13 of them were novices in 30 male religious institutes (2 Benedictines, 2 Franciscans, 1 Jesuit, 2 Capuchins, 1 Minority, 2 Salesians, and 3 Trappists),⁴⁹ 13 novices in female religious institutes (2 discalced Carmelite nuns, 1 Capuchin Poor Clare, 2 Trappists, 2 Sisters of Mercy of St. Borromeo, 1 Franciscan Opava, 2 Franciscans of the Holy Cross, 1 Salesian, 1 Servant of the Silesian Virgin Mary, and 1 Little Sister of Jesus), and 4 novices in secular institutes.⁵⁰

This could serve to indicate that there is not all that much religious vocation, as well as the fact that those interested in this way of life are not deemed appropriate during the initial stages of prenovitiate formation. I am of more of the second opinion. A religious institute unfortunately often attracts the interest of non-standard types of individuals (e.g. the homeless, people who have been unable to find a place in society or people with a certain mental immaturity or disorder), who are convinced that their problems are going to be simply solved in this way. The second group is the recently baptized ones, who during the initial enthusiasm, but again without the necessary experience with the daily life of faith and a because of certain anchoring decide for such a radical change in their lives. A certain correction is therefore necessary on the part of certain religious institutes, which should ideally take place before the proper commencement of the religious life. This concerns both the protection of the particular religious community and assistance to the candidate in his/her seeking. The current candidates for religious life often lack basic human maturity and experience (more than Christian maturity). This is not an issue specific for religious life but a social problem in general. The initial formation of candidates for religious life is designed precisely for its improvement. There is therefore necessary to choose those formatters who have this maturity and are able to share it.⁵¹ The youth of today are by no means oblivious to God's call to the religious way of life, although

⁴⁹ CONFERENCE OF HIGHER RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS: *Catalogue of male and female religious institutes in the Czech Republic*. Prague 2016, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 24–25.

⁵¹ Cf. VC, n. 66. Formatters should be experienced in the life of prayer and dedication. They should have the ability to listen and lead dialogue, as well as confidentiality, discretion, truthfulness, enough time for personal conversations and positive attitude to work with the youth.

it often means swimming against the current in relation to their peers. The pastoral care of the vocation will allow them to discover this way of life, develop and live through it, in order to encourage the pluralism and diversity of life of Church in which all the states and groups complement one other. The purpose of the religious state is to provide testimony that the world cannot be reformed and dedicated to God without the spirit of the beatitudes.⁵² There should be no extremes: neither too active a community manipulating the candidate in the direction towards a religious life, nor too active a candidate who would quickly want to enter into all religious rights and obligations to demonstrate that he/she “can manage.” The principles of formation to consecrated life and accompaniment on this path are stated by various programs offered by both the dioceses and religious institutes themselves. Furthermore, the institutes have drawn up detailed plans based on the particular features of the institute for each period of formation, which they update regularly. The fact that the activity of successful accompaniment does not only depend on the formation or formater should not be ignored as a crucial factor here is the Holy Spirit guiding people in a concrete, specific way.⁵³

⁵² Cf. *LG*, n. 31.

⁵³ Cf. *PI*, n. 19.

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MONIKA MENKE

Young People at Present and Their Preparation for Religious Life

Summary

Religious consecration is a mere development of baptismal consecration, it is its improved expression and leads to service in the heart of the Church. Therefore, it is like the preparation for marriage, preparation for another way of dedication of life is one of the fundamental tasks of the Church community. The article deals with the subject on the border between of the canon law and of the pastoral theology: the formation of contemporary youth for their religious vocations. This is primarily the formation of the personality leading to maturity for a lifetime decision enshrined in family education and in the consequential pastoral care of vocations in the dioceses. A specific type is then the pastoral care of vocations in religious institutes. This will be exemplified with the example of initial formation in the Czech province of the Order of Preachers, in the case of the Dominican Brethren and of the Contemplative Nuns. In conclusion, are summarized and evaluated the statistical data about the status of candidates for religious life in the Czech Republic and the reasons for the low number of vocations at present.

MONIKA MENKE

Les jeunes gens à l'époque contemporaine et leur préparation à la vie religieuse

Resume

La consécration religieuse est profondément enracinée dans la consécration baptismale, en l'exprimant plus pleinement, et conduit au service au sein de l'Église. Pour cette raison, analogiquement à la préparation au mariage, la préparation à un autre mode de vie appartient aux tâches fondamentales de la communauté ecclésiastique. L'article est consacré au thème se situant à la charnière du droit canonique et de la théologie pastorale: la préparation des jeunes gens d'aujourd'hui à la vie monastique. C'est avant tout la formation de la personnalité dans sa maturité consistant à prendre une décision pour toute la vie, basée sur l'éducation familiale et la prêtrise de vocations dans un diocèse qui la continue. Un type spécifique est ensuite la prêtrise de vocations dans des institutions religieuses que l'on a présentées en s'appuyant sur les exemples de la formation initiale dans la province tchèque de l'ordre des Prêcheurs: chez les frères dominicains et

les religieuses contemplatives. Dans la conclusion sont évaluées les données statistiques concernant le statut des candidats à la vie monastique en République tchèque ainsi que les causes du faible nombre de vocations à présent.

Mots clés: vocations monastiques en République tchèque, vie monastique, droit canonique

MONIKA MENKE

I giovani attualmente e la loro preparazione alla vita religiosa

Sommario

La consacrazione religiosa è fortemente radicata nella consacrazione del battesimo, esprimendola più pienamente, e conduce al servizio nel cuore della Chiesa. Per questo motivo analogicamente alla preparazione al matrimonio anche la preparazione ad un altro modo di vita rientra tra i compiti fondamentali della comunità ecclesiale. L'articolo è dedicato ad un argomento al confine tra il diritto canonico e la teologia pastorale: la preparazione dei giovani contemporanei alla vita religiosa. Si tratta soprattutto della formazione della personalità nella maturità a prendere la decisione per tutta la vita, basata sull'educazione familiare e che trova continuazione nella pastorale delle vocazioni nella diocesi. Un tipo specifico è poi la pastorale delle vocazioni negli istituti religiosi che è stata presentata sugli esempi della formazione iniziale nella provincia ceca dell'Ordine dei Predicatori: dai frati domenicani e dalle monache contemplative. Nella conclusione valutiamo i dati statistici riguardanti lo status dei candidati alla vita religiosa nella Repubblica Ceca e le cause del numero basso attuale di vocazioni.

Parole chiave: vocazioni religione nella Repubblica Ceca, vita religiosa, diritto canonico