

WHAT IS THE PRE NOVITIATE PROGRAM

The Pre-novitiate program is a period of formal preparation for admission to the Missionary Servants. During the time of pre-novitiate the individual takes part in a planned program aimed at leading him to a mature and informed decision and commitment to the Religious Institute as a novice.

The objective of the program is to assist the individual in the development of the fundamental human and Christian qualities which will equip him to choose and commit himself to the spiritual, community, apostolic values and ideals of the Missionary Servants. Academic achievement appropriate to this level of formation is expected as well as an appropriate degree of manifested appropriation of Missionary Servant charism. The integrating element of the pre-novitiate will be the human development necessary for a religious vocation specifically as a Missionary Servant of the Most Holy Trinity, be it as a Religious Brother candidate or Priest candidate.

The Students

I. Present Students. At the beginning of the Spring Semester, 2016, the formation program counted four students: Charlie Felix, Nicolas Torres, Cristian Ortiz and Luis Alberto Fernandez.

Charlie Félix entered the program as a college freshman on August 24, 2013 at RCC. He is presently attending Cal State San Bernardino and is expected to receive his BA in philosophy in 2017 and be a candidate for the novitiate year 2017-2018. He will begin his stage of postulancy this summer. He is presently 23 years of age and feels called to be a cleric.

Nicolás Adán Torres entered the program as a college freshman on August 14, 2014 as an 18-year-old at RCC. He suffered the death of his mother last year which caused him to lose an entire semester of school. I anticipate that he will transfer to Cal State San Bernardino and continue his undergraduate work in philosophy expecting him to graduate in 2018 and perhaps be available for the novitiate year 2018-2019. Two pertinent issues: he is still a very young man and he is also begun to discern a vocation as a Brother.

Luis Alberto Fernández entered the program February 8, 2016 as a college freshman. He is presently 25 years of age. This first semester I feel will be a real discernment period. The issues that I believe will enter into the discernment process have to do with how well informed he is in terms of his option for Religious Life and whether or not some apparent learning disabilities can be manageable.

Cristian Eduardo Ortiz Reyes entered the program on February 8, 2016 as a college freshman. He is presently 24 years of age. Cristian came to the program with a wealth of experience and is very capable of giving expression to his sense of vocation and gives every indication of high motivation and an above average IQ. This first semester will be important in his discernment, I believe, as he comes to test the ideal with the reality of a Religious Vocation.

The Professed

Fr. Nick and Allen are residents here at the Cenacle. Fr. Nick is in “senior ministry”, very active in prison ministry and a very positive presence in the house. He is very supportive to the program, participating in all activities with the men, presiding the liturgy especially when I am not present. Allen is the Vocation Director. He is a very positive influence in the house, though he is not as active a participant in activities for any number of reasons, among them are his own responsibilities as the Director of Vocation ministry which takes him out of the house and creates a different schedule for him. We anticipate the presence of Aro Varnabas with us in the next few months. His presence is very welcome.

The Formation Context

- I. A team approach among adult men** is the important guiding principle: Vocation Promotion and the Formation Program collaborate especially in support of Vocation Ministry. The house of formation is a center for vocation promotion and each of us is committed to this task. Along with the formation team that is also a context for vocation promotion and in dialogue with the students, the development of the program in its various requirements takes place.
- II.** Integration of the men into the apostolic activity at Coachella.
- III. The house of formation is a spiritual center for the formation of apostles.** In the course of the year, we hosted a number of retreats and gatherings aimed at the promotion of an apostolic spirit in the laity, promotion of vocations for the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity and a formation experience for the students on the “how to” of promoting an apostolic spirit in the laity.

Outside the Cenacle:

- A. Francisco is spiritual director for the team leaders of Movimiento Familiar Cristiano. - The team leaders have taken the script of the Movimiento and in practice revised it to become an apostolic movement that focuses on a community experience that invites families to heal and grow.
- B. Francisco is Missionary Servant presence at Cal State San Bernardino

- C. A key experience this past year was a 3-day workshop on spirituality given to approximately 40 persons. The fruit of this workshop was energy for mission in the everyday of life and its challenges.

IV. The house of formation is a place of encounter with the MCF. The house is the gathering site for ST Regional meetings and in the past for MCA formation sessions. The students are present to each event. Contact with the MCF has many practical benefits among them: contact and availability of MCF spiritual directors, a sense of community, an increased knowledge of the Congregation. One key event this month is related to the liturgy offered for deceased Missionary Servants. In attendance were most of the STs from the local area as well as several MCA members.

V. The house of formation has access to increasing opportunities for apostolates that fit our charism. We continue to explore ministry with the homeless population, social justice ministry especially regarding immigration issues and the prison population. We do have a presence in at least six parishes in the diocese. Our willingness to participate in each parish is directly related to being able to give expression to our charism (makers of apostles; work with the poor and abandoned; promote ST vocations), we will not simply offer sacramental supply ministry. Specifically, the students are involved in catechetical ministries and youth ministry.

VI. The house of formation is also the Vocation Promotion Office. The students have become active vocation promoters. The telling of their vocation story, the organizing of events and the collaboration between them fosters their own vocation and is a formation experience in itself. With the Vocation Director present, the formation program has access to another formator besides the director of the program.

VII. Riverside City College and Cal State San Bernardino. Both of these campuses continue to be promising sites for academic preparedness for our students. The recent entry into CTU allows an increased clarity in the formation in terms of academic requirements. In the very near future, as men begin to transition to CTU we will be able to have a better way of measuring and evaluating the fit between these campuses and CTU.

VII. The house of formation, physical structure.

- A. The house of formation is “basically sound”, we lease the property from the diocese of San Bernardino and are not therefore burdened with ownership.
- B. We have one employee, Catalina León who provides 20 hours of work a week as a cook and some light housekeeping.
- C. We have two psychological consultants who are basically responsible for group dynamics on a once a month basis.

Challenges Experienced

1. Having the Director of the Pre novitiate also become the VDC director is a challenge. With only two men in formation, it was a challenge that was not overwhelming. With two additional men and expectation of an increasing number of vocations, the challenge is bound to expand. However, going forward, the major bulk of the creation of VDC documents and the identification of a post novitiate in the US, two major tasks will not be pending issues. The supervision of each stage in the formation program will also be more manageable given the evolving process of communication via Skype.
2. The present site of the formation house, in terms of an older building in need of repair has been a challenge and will continue to be so. The parish that leases the building to us, still for a relative small amount, is not affluent. They put in new carpeting for us, they have replaced AC units and made other major repairs. One major repair issue has to do with plumbing. Water pressure throughout the house is very low. Ancient pipes have oxidized and restricted flow. Replacement of water conduits is a major expense that the parish is not capable of assuming at this time. I would argue that the space available and location and rent still makes it an important site for us and would recommend some sort of an equitable sharing of a several stage repair of the water pressure issue.
3. The fact that the students do not represent a homogeneous reality is a challenge. Each is at a different level of formation; the structuring of the formation program requires flexibility in order to make sure that the students are following an accurate path.

The 2016–2017 mission plan for the Riverside Pre Novitiate Formation Program

1. Monitor the wearing of “two hats” to make sure that the one does not suffer because of the other and make the General Custodian aware of any difficulty as soon as possible. This will entail significant planning to anticipate trips overseas, good time management and the attentiveness to integrating laity into the administrative and/or secretarial needs of both offices.
2. Work on a proposal to present both the parish and the Congregation regarding plumbing repairs, it may be a three-part expense spread out over three years.
3. Find a way to work diligently at the implementation of the formation handbook and curriculum. This will probably necessitate that the program admits new members only once a

year.

4. Implement a better processing of the apostolic experience by using a reflection tool and better use of the Personal Growth Plan. And, continue with the individual structuring of a “long range vision towards Final Vows” - With the end in mind, attempt to imagine the placing of ST retreats, mission experiences, apostolate and academic goals. This is a formation exercise and not just a planning strategy. By looking forward, the student can identify better his gifts, what God is calling him to be prepared for and a refinement of his vocation as either a cleric or a Brother.

As mentioned last year, in order to provide for the best functioning of the Holy Spirit Pre Novitiate Cenacle, there needs to be a constant attentiveness to the Spirit in prayer, study, work and play. Significant resources that need to be utilized are the ST community support and wisdom of the California Region and MCF that is available. It will be very important to continue to foster the collaborative approach that has been very beneficial, especially the use of the Formation Team. In terms of financial resources, we look first of all to a responsible stewardship based not only on diligent administration but also in keeping with a simple life style. We look to the raising of funds in the local area to ease the burden on the TGO and MPO.

Employees: We have one employee who works 4 hours a day as a cook and does some housekeeping.

Respectfully submitted,

In the Trinity,

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