



*Original text: Italian
Unrevised translation*

1st General Congregation
October 2, 2024

**PRESENTATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE 10 WORKING GROUPS
ESTABLISHED BY POPE FRANCIS**

Group 4

**The revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*
in a missionary synodal perspective (SR 11)**

Methodology and Approach

The Group meets fortnightly and is inspired by the method of ‘Conversation in the Spirit’, so as to enhance the contribution of each member of the Group. Reference points for reflection are the *Ratio Fundamentalis* and other documents on the formation of ordained ministers, along with the *Summary Report* of the Synodal Assembly of October 2023, and the *Instrumentum laboris* for the Synod’s Second Session.

Guiding the research and discussion so far have been the three questions indicated by the *Work Outline* of the Synod, which calls for the Group to proceed ‘to carry out a review of formation to the ordained ministry and a revision of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* in the perspective of a synodal missionary Church:

- Which aspects, criteria, provisions of the current *Ratio Fundamentalis* correspond to a missionary synodal Church, and which are most in need of being rethought?
- What choices should be made to better connect the training programs for ordained ministry with those proposed for other ministerial figures (both instituted and ‘de facto’ ministries)?
- What changes could be envisaged in order to adequately recognise the competence of Episcopal Conferences in the different contexts?

Considerations and orientations that have thus far emerged

It has been noted that the current *Ratio Fundamentalis* dates from 2016 and has brought – due also to the personal involvement of Pope Francis - important new emphases that are in consonance with a synodal and missionary Church, including the insistence on discipleship as a fundamental note of initial and ongoing formation, and an indispensable prerequisite for configuration to Christ the Shepherd and Servant; the indispensable communitarian dimension of formation; the need for an integral formation that gives due place to the human and affective

dimension, together with the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions; and greater attention to the discernment of the call.

Being a rather recent document, the current *Ratio* is still in the process of implementation. Moreover, based on said *Ratio* are the respective *Ratio Nationales* currently being prepared the world over, some of which have already been confirmed by the Dicastery for the Clergy, with some on the home stretch, while others are still being drafted. It does not seem opportune, therefore, to think at this time of a rewrite of the *Ratio*, as Pope Francis emphasised in his address to the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for the Clergy, on 6 June 2024, when he said: “The *Ratio Fundamentalis* has been done: there is no need to make another one. Let us go ahead with this one”.

On the other hand, the *Synthesis Report* of the first Session of the Synod and the *Instrumentum laboris* for the second Session gather and deliver a series of instances related to the journey of a synodal and missionary Church in the current change of epoch that cannot be ignored, including the opportunity to deepen the relational identity of the ordained ministry, in dialogue with the other ministries, defining it ‘in and by’ the People of God; the need for a formation more rooted in the experience of the People of God, with its various charisms and ministries, and in contact with the poor; moments of shared formation of the laity, consecrated persons, ordained ministers and seminarians, that foster mutual knowledge and collaboration; greater participation of all the components of the People of God in the formation of ordained ministers, with particular attention to the contribution of women and families; the learning of indispensable skills for a synodal Church, such as listening, dialogue, co-responsibility and community discernment; the urgency of responding to the missionary mandate of Jesus.

The aforesaid leads one to think about the possibility of drafting a Preamble to the *Ratio Fundamentalis* that, on the one hand, clearly delineates the relational identity of ordained ministers in a synodal and missionary Church, while on the other hand, indicates principles and criteria for the implementation of the *Ratio Fundamentalis* and the *Ratio Nationales* in harmony with this ecclesiological and missiological framework.

Some instances and creative tensions

Among the elements gathered so far, we would like to point out some instances and creative tensions to keep in mind:

- Avoid conceiving the Seminary model as a prolonged experience disconnected from the People of God, envisaging other formation models, the participation of the laity in the planning of formation and the inclusion of innovative and missionary experiences, not alternative but complementary to the Seminary formation process.
- Ensure the necessary time and space (‘come away’) to deepen and verify the call to the ordained ministry and the charism of celibacy in an intense spiritual life marked by guarded and guided rhythms. At the same time, ensure a broad exposure to ordinary life and that of Christian communities throughout initial formation, so as to foster a solid integral maturation.
- Encourage a more shared formation of ordained ministers with other ministries, vocations and charisms, so that the candidates learn to engage in common processes, without losing, in the relationship and dialogue with men and women religious, together with mature and well-formed lay men and women, either the specific identity of the ordained ministry, or the secular nature of the lay vocation and ministries. Proceeding

thus will ensure that each one fits into the dynamics and formation structures for his or her own ministerial profile, and that the conferral of the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, on the path to the ordained ministry, are not reduced to mere formal steps, as required by Canon Law, but make their evangelical and missionary meaning explicit.

- Through the various stages, it will be necessary to ensure that all aspects of formation are attuned to the singularity of each candidate, without losing sight of fact that the discernment of a call from God is paramount and that the life of the ordained minister is radically nourished by his ever-growing friendship with Jesus. Personal accompaniment of each candidate in listening to what is within him, and at the same time, fostering, on the one hand, a real fraternity among ordained ministers, which is often lacking, and on the other hand, a living relationship with lay men and women that helps to maintain a relationship with the ‘things of life’ (friendship, self-care, health, contact with nature, civic awareness, etc.), as indispensable conditions for developing a mature personality, essential for a balanced affectivity, self-mastery, integrated sexuality and preventing the scourge of abuse.
- Take into account the great diversity of ecclesial and cultural contexts, leaving the Bishops' Conferences ample freedom for establishing the relevant norms, as stipulated by the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (nos. 7-8). It will be necessary to accelerate the drafting of the *Ratio Nationalis*, where it is not yet completed, to establish the terms of its implementation where it has not yet been carried out, and to verify its criteria and conditions where it has already come into force.
- For a fruitful implementation of the *Ratio Nationalis*, the involvement of the various components of the People of God is required, particularly diocesan pastoral councils; identify and ensure sufficiently clear and concrete criteria for its application (e.g. regarding the sufficient number and composition of formative communities); take into consideration the regional diversities within a nation; achieve all this in a synodal interaction between the local Church and the universal Church.

Perspectives for the continuation of the work

We propose to continue our study in the light of what will emerge from the Second Session of the Synodal Assembly and the subsequent pronouncements of Pope Francis.

In the spirit of the Synod, we intend to consult persons and institutions, renowned for their experience in this field, not excluding the possibility of hearing from formators and seminarians themselves.

Of special importance to us is the search for good practices already in place that respond to the demands expressed by the Synodal Path for the present and future formation of ordained ministers.

Considering the relevance of the topic, it will be necessary to foresee - as suggested by the *Work Outline* - an evaluation and an in-depth study of the topic at an interdicasterial level that, in addition to the Dicastery for the Clergy and the General Secretariat of the Synod, thus extending the representation on the Study Group to involve the Dicasteries for Evangelization; for Eastern Churches; for Laity, Family and Life; for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; and for Culture and Education. At the next Group meeting, the subsequent steps and timeline will be decided upon, along with those whom we intend to consult.