

FOUNDATIONAL VISION OF CLARETIAN FORMATION

Pedagogical and Accompaniment Strategies

The foundational vision of Claretian formation presents the formative journey as a **lifelong Forge of transformation**, in which the person is progressively purified, configured to Christ the Missionary, tempered in fidelity through trials and responsibilities, and continually sent in service of the Gospel. St. Paul presents it beautifully, *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”* (Ephesians 3:17–19). This process unfolds through the living interaction of divine grace and human cooperation: the Holy Spirit acts as the fire that purifies and enkindles, the community and formative structures serve as the anvil on which life is shaped, and the formator accompanies as a discerning guide who helps interpret and direct the process of growth. Formation, therefore, is not understood as the simple acquisition of theological knowledge or the completion of institutional stages, but as an ongoing journey of inner reconfiguration in Christ that engages the whole person—humanly, spiritually, relationally, and apostolically. In this perspective, the missionary vocation matures gradually through lived experience, personal conversion, and responsible participation in the life and mission of the Church.

Consequently, the pedagogy guiding Claretian formation must be **developmental, experiential, integrative, and mission-oriented**. A developmental pedagogy recognizes that human and spiritual maturation unfolds over time through stages and recurring cycles of growth; it respects the rhythm of the person, allowing motivations, identity, and freedom to mature progressively rather than forcing premature interiorization of ideals. An experiential pedagogy places concrete life at the centre of the formative process, understanding that transformation occurs not primarily through abstract instruction but through reflection on lived experiences—community relationships, apostolic engagement, personal struggles, and moments of grace. An integrative pedagogy ensures that the various dimensions of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual, communal, and pastoral—are not treated as separate compartments but are woven together into a coherent process that shapes the entire person. Finally, a mission-oriented pedagogy continually directs the formative journey outward toward the service of the Gospel, ensuring that personal growth does not become self-referential but is ordered toward apostolic availability and generous self-gift for the Kingdom. In this way formation becomes a dynamic path in which the candidate learns to interpret his life in the light of faith, respond increasingly with freedom to God’s call, and gradually embody the Claretian charism in the service of the Church and the world.

1. Developmental Pedagogy: Respecting the Rhythm of Human Growth

Claretian formation is rooted in a developmental understanding of the human person. Human maturation does not occur through instantaneous change or through the mere acquisition of knowledge; rather, it unfolds gradually through stages of psychological, spiritual, relational, and vocational integration. Formation must therefore respect the **rhythm of human development**, recognizing that growth involves periods of progress, plateau, return, and deepening. In this perspective, the role of formation is not to produce rapid conformity to ideals but to accompany the gradual transformation of the person so that freedom, identity, and missionary availability mature authentically over time. The developmental approach recognizes that each stage of formation presents specific tasks, challenges, and opportunities for growth. By respecting this rhythm, formation becomes more realistic, humane, and effective, allowing the missionary vocation to develop with depth and stability rather than superficial enthusiasm or premature responsibility.



Pedagogical Strategies

A developmental pedagogy organizes formation not merely according to academic programs or institutional requirements but according to the **developmental needs of the person at each stage of life**. While theological and intellectual formation remain essential, they must be integrated within a broader formative process that attends to emotional maturity, relational capacity, spiritual depth, and vocational clarity. Formation structures and programs should therefore correspond to the developmental phases of the Forge, in which the person gradually moves through processes of purification, configuration, tempering, and missionary sending. These movements do not function as rigid stages but as a dynamic developmental map that helps formators discern what kind of growth the person is ready to undertake at a given moment.

In this perspective, growth is presented as **progressive integration rather than immediate perfection**. Candidates are invited to understand formation not as a demand for flawless behaviour but as a journey of increasing truthfulness, freedom, and coherence. The Forge sequence—Purified, Configured, Tempered, and Sent—serves as a pedagogical framework that helps candidates recognize how different experiences contribute to their maturation. Purification clarifies motivations and heals wounds; configuration shapes vocational identity in Christ; tempering strengthens perseverance through responsibility and trial; and sending opens the missionary to apostolic availability. By situating personal experiences within this developmental framework, candidates learn to interpret their growth realistically and constructively.

Another important pedagogical principle is the encouragement of **gradual internalization rather than external conformity**. Formation should avoid producing behaviour that merely imitates expected religious patterns without deeper personal assimilation. Instead, it should foster the interior appropriation of values such as obedience, community life, apostolic zeal, and evangelical simplicity. This requires time, reflection, and honest engagement with personal motivations. Gradual internalization ensures that commitments arise from freedom rather than pressure, allowing the missionary identity to become stable and authentic.

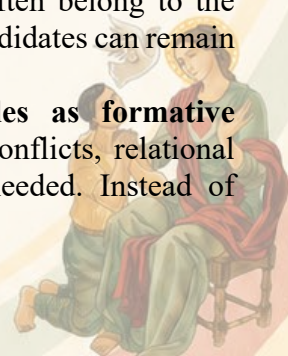
Developmental pedagogy also requires an **integrative approach to growth**. Psychological maturity, spiritual life, relational capacity, and apostolic engagement cannot be treated as separate or parallel tracks. Emotional integration influences prayer life; spiritual depth shapes relational attitudes; community living reveals unresolved human patterns; and apostolic experiences test the authenticity of one's vocation. Formation programs must therefore create environments where these dimensions interact dynamically so that the whole person is formed in a coherent and balanced way.

Accompaniment Strategies

Within this developmental framework, accompaniment becomes a process of attentive discernment and patient guidance. Formators are called to help the formandus **recognize and understand his current stage of growth**. Through dialogue, reflection, and observation, the formator assists the candidate in identifying his strengths, limitations, motivations, and areas requiring further integration. This awareness enables the formandus to engage formation more consciously and responsibly, recognizing that growth is a process that unfolds over time.

Formators must also **normalize the reality of slow or uneven growth**. Human development rarely follows a smooth and predictable path; periods of enthusiasm may be followed by discouragement, clarity by confusion, and stability by moments of regression. When candidates encounter such fluctuations, they may interpret them as signs of failure or lack of vocation. Developmental accompaniment helps them understand that such experiences often belong to the normal process of maturation. By recognizing the legitimacy of these rhythms, candidates can remain engaged in formation without falling into discouragement or defensive attitudes.

Another key accompaniment strategy involves **interpreting struggles as formative opportunities rather than failures**. Personal difficulties—such as emotional conflicts, relational tensions, or vocational doubts—often reveal areas where deeper growth is needed. Instead of



suppressing or ignoring these experiences, the formator helps the candidate explore their meaning within the broader journey of formation. In this way struggles become moments of purification and learning that contribute to the gradual shaping of a mature missionary identity.

Finally, developmental accompaniment requires that formators **adjust expectations according to the person's level of maturity**. Candidates differ significantly in their psychological development, emotional stability, relational skills, and spiritual experience. Effective accompaniment avoids both unrealistic demands and excessive permissiveness. Instead, it seeks to provide challenges that are appropriate to the candidate's developmental stage, encouraging growth while respecting the limits of the person's current capacities. Through such balanced guidance, the formator helps the formandus progress steadily toward greater integration, responsibility, and readiness for mission.

In this way, developmental pedagogy and accompaniment work together to create a formation process that is patient, realistic, and transformative. By respecting the rhythm of human growth and accompanying the gradual maturation of freedom and identity, Claretian formation enables the missionary to become a person deeply rooted in Christ and prepared for lifelong service in the mission of the Gospel.

2. Interpretive Pedagogy: Helping Formandi Read Their Life Story

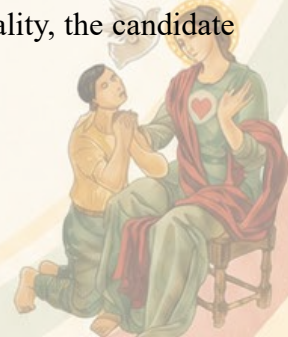
Claretian formation within the Forge framework is fundamentally **interpretive rather than merely instructional**. While knowledge, discipline, and pastoral skills remain important, authentic formation occurs when the candidate learns to **interpret his own life in the light of God's action**. Human experience—personal history, relationships, struggles, desires, and choices—becomes the primary material through which the Spirit gradually shapes the missionary. Formation therefore invites the formandus to move beyond simply following rules or acquiring competencies toward a deeper awareness of how God has been present and active within his life story. Through this interpretive process, the candidate learns that vocation is not imposed externally but discovered within the unfolding narrative of his own existence.

Pedagogical Strategies

An interpretive pedagogy encourages practices that help candidates become attentive to the meaning of their experiences. Formation programs should incorporate reflective practices such as **life-story reflection, journaling, spiritual autobiography, and guided group sharing**, which allow formandi to revisit their personal history with honesty and faith. These practices help candidates recognize patterns in their lives, identify significant turning points, and discover how God has gradually guided them toward vocation.

Integrating **personal history into vocational discernment** is essential in this process. Candidates are invited to explore formative relationships, early aspirations, moments of suffering, and experiences of grace that have shaped their identity and desires. Rather than ignoring past wounds or idealizing the past, formation encourages a truthful reading of life that allows healing, reconciliation, and deeper self-understanding.

Interpretive pedagogy also teaches candidates to read experience through multiple lenses that illuminate its meaning. The **Word of God** provides a primary framework, allowing the formandus to recognize parallels between biblical narratives and his own journey of call, struggle, and conversion. The **Claretian charism** offers another interpretive horizon, helping the candidate understand how his personal story may resonate with the missionary spirit of St. Anthony Mary Claret. Finally, the **reality of the mission and the needs of the world** become a living context in which personal vocation takes shape. By learning to interpret life through Scripture, charism, and missionary reality, the candidate gradually perceives his story as part of a larger narrative of salvation and service.



Accompaniment Strategies

Within this interpretive pedagogy, the formator serves as a **companion and interpreter of experience**, helping the candidate read his life with greater depth and clarity. Accompaniment involves attentive listening and reflective dialogue that enables the formandus to explore the deeper dynamics shaping his journey. Formators guide candidates in examining their **motivations, wounds, resistances, and desires**, recognizing that these interior movements often influence vocational choices in ways that are not immediately evident.

Through patient conversation and discernment, the formator helps the candidate integrate both **psychological and spiritual dimensions of experience**. Personal struggles, emotional reactions, and relational patterns are not dismissed as merely psychological concerns but are explored as possible places where grace seeks to work. Similarly, spiritual experiences are interpreted realistically, ensuring that enthusiasm or religious sentiment does not obscure deeper unresolved dynamics.

A key task of accompaniment is helping the formandus **identify where God is already at work within his history**. By recognizing the impact of the guidance received, the growth and transformation taking place through events and encounters, the candidate learns to trust that vocation unfolds through the concrete events of life rather than through abstract ideals alone. This awareness deepens gratitude, humility, and confidence in God's providence.

In this process, formators often use reflective questions that stimulate deeper insight and personal responsibility. Questions such as *"Where do you see God shaping your life story?"*, *"What experiences have purified your motivations?"*, or *"What resistances still limit your freedom?"* encourage the candidate to engage actively with his own formation. These questions help the formandus move from passive participation in formation to **conscious interpretation of his life journey**, recognizing how past experiences, present challenges, and future aspirations converge in the unfolding call to mission.

Through such interpretive pedagogy and accompaniment, the candidate gradually learns to see his life not as a series of isolated events but as a coherent narrative shaped by grace. In this way formation fosters a deeper self-understanding that allows the missionary to respond to God's call with greater freedom, realism, and fidelity.

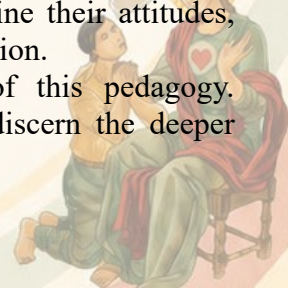
3. Pedagogy of Freedom and Responsibility

At the heart of Claretian formation lies the conviction that authentic vocation requires **responsible freedom**. The goal of formation is not merely external conformity to rules or institutional expectations, but the gradual emergence of a person who freely chooses to live according to the Gospel and the missionary charism. True vocational commitment cannot be sustained by pressure or obedience alone; it must arise from an interior conviction rooted in conscience, discernment, and personal responsibility. For this reason, formation seeks to cultivate mature individuals capable of making thoughtful decisions, assuming responsibility for their growth, and responding freely to God's call.

Pedagogical Strategies

A pedagogy of freedom encourages candidates to **take active responsibility for their own formation**. Rather than perceiving formation as something imposed by authorities, formandi are invited to recognize themselves as protagonists in their vocational journey responsibly collaborating with the action of the Spirit. This involves fostering habits of self-reflection, personal evaluation, and honest dialogue about one's growth and limitations. Formation structures should therefore create opportunities for regular personal assessment, encouraging candidates to examine their attitudes, motivations, and commitments in the light of the Gospel and the missionary vocation.

Developing **decision-making capacity** is another essential aspect of this pedagogy. Candidates should learn to weigh alternatives, reflect on consequences, and discern the deeper



motivations behind their choices. Formation programs can cultivate this ability through guided discernment exercises, reflective discussions, and practical responsibilities within the community and apostolate.

An important element of this process is teaching candidates to **discern motivations and desires**. Human actions are often influenced by unconscious drives, emotional needs, or social expectations. By learning to examine these inner dynamics, the candidate becomes more capable of choosing freely what truly corresponds to God's call rather than simply reacting to external pressures or internal impulses.

Accompaniment Strategies

In accompaniment, the formator supports the development of freedom by **avoiding controlling or paternalistic attitudes**. While guidance and correction remain important, excessive control can inhibit the candidate's ability to assume responsibility for his own decisions. Instead, formators create a climate of trust in which the formandus can explore questions, doubts, and aspirations honestly.

Encouraging the formandus to **own his choices** is a central task of accompaniment. Rather than making decisions on behalf of the candidate, the formator helps him reflect on options, motivations, and consequences so that decisions arise from his own discernment. This process fosters maturity and accountability, preparing the future missionary to exercise responsible freedom in ministry and community life.

Formators should also favour **reflective questions rather than directive instructions**. Questions invite the candidate to examine his inner motivations and engage actively with the discernment process. By contrast, purely directive guidance may produce compliance but not interior conviction.

Ultimately, accompaniment in this pedagogy focuses on **supporting the discernment process rather than imposing conclusions**. The formator helps the candidate recognize movements of grace and resistance, clarify intentions, and align his choices with the Gospel and the Claretian mission. In this way formation seeks not to manage behaviour but to **awaken conscience**, enabling the person to respond freely and responsibly to the call of God.

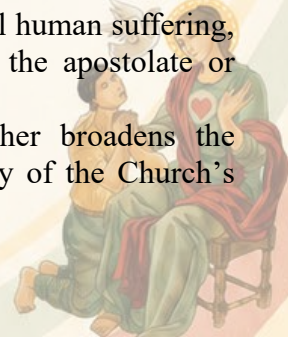
4. Experiential Pedagogy: Learning Through Life

The imagery of the Forge highlights that transformation occurs on the **anvil of daily life**. Formation is not confined to classrooms, conferences, or spiritual exercises; it unfolds within the ordinary experiences of community living, pastoral engagement, and personal relationships. Through these experiences the candidate encounters both his strengths and limitations, providing the raw material through which growth takes place. Experiential pedagogy therefore emphasizes learning through lived experience rather than through theoretical instruction alone.

Pedagogical Strategies

Formation programs should intentionally integrate experiences that expose candidates to the concrete realities of missionary life. **Community living** becomes a primary context where interpersonal dynamics reveal patterns of communication, cooperation, **teamwork**, and conflict, making it a privileged space where individuals learn not only how to relate, but also how to collaborate effectively, share responsibilities, and contribute constructively to a common mission. **Pastoral immersion and mission experiences** allow candidates to encounter real human suffering, cultural diversity, and the demands of evangelization. Responsibilities within the apostolate or community help candidates develop initiative, accountability, and leadership.

Exposure to **intercultural encounters and community service** further broadens the candidate's perspective, enabling him to appreciate the richness and complexity of the Church's



mission in diverse contexts. These experiences challenge personal assumptions and stimulate growth in empathy, adaptability, and missionary creativity.

In experiential pedagogy, learning follows a dynamic cycle: **experience** → **reflection** → **integration**. Experiences alone do not guarantee growth; they must be interpreted through reflection and dialogue so that the candidate can internalize their meaning and apply the lessons learned.

Accompaniment Strategies

Formators play a crucial role in helping candidates interpret their experiences. Through reflective conversations, they encourage formandi to analyse the emotional, relational, and spiritual dimensions of daily events. By asking questions and offering insights, the formator helps the candidate recognize how these experiences contribute to the process of purification, configuration, tempering, and sending.

Community tensions, pastoral challenges, and personal failures are not treated as obstacles to formation but as **privileged opportunities for growth**. When interpreted constructively, such experiences reveal areas requiring further integration and encourage the development of humility, patience, and resilience.

Typical accompaniment dialogue may include questions such as: *What did this experience reveal about you? What attitudes did it purify? What does it teach about mission?* Through this reflective process, daily life becomes a living classroom where the candidate learns to recognize the formative action of the Spirit.

5. Pedagogy of Integration

Claretian formation seeks to form **whole persons rather than fragmented specialists**. Human development, spiritual life, relational maturity, and apostolic engagement are inseparable aspects of the missionary vocation. When these dimensions are treated independently, formation risks producing individuals who may be spiritually devout but emotionally immature, intellectually competent but pastorally insensitive, or active in mission but lacking interior depth. A pedagogy of integration ensures that all aspects of the person grow in harmony.

Pedagogical Strategies

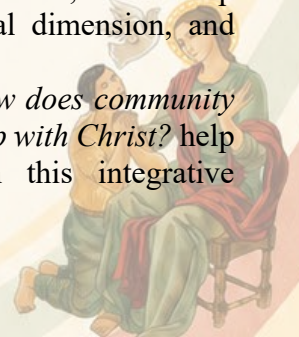
Formation programs must avoid artificially separating **psychological formation, spiritual formation, and pastoral training**. Instead, these dimensions should interact dynamically within the formative process. Prayer should illuminate pastoral activity, community life should shape personal identity, and apostolic service should deepen spiritual commitment.

Educational programs, community structures, and pastoral placements should therefore be designed in ways that encourage candidates to connect their experiences across these dimensions. For example, pastoral experiences can be reflected upon in prayer and spiritual direction, while community interactions can be explored in light of psychological and relational growth.

Accompaniment Strategies

Formators assist candidates in integrating different aspects of their lives through reflective dialogue that connects personal experiences with spiritual and missionary meaning. Accompaniment may focus on various dimensions of growth: emotional maturity in the human dimension, relationship with Christ in the spiritual dimension, capacity for fraternity in the relational dimension, and commitment to service in the missionary dimension.

Questions such as *How do your emotions influence your prayer life? How does community life shape your missionary vocation? How does this event deepen your relationship with Christ?* help candidates perceive the interconnectedness of their experiences. Through this integrative



accompaniment, the formandus gradually develops a coherent identity in which personal, spiritual, and missionary dimensions mutually enrich one another.

Summary: Pedagogical Logic of the Forge

Forge Movement	Pedagogical Focus	Accompaniment Focus
Purified	Self-knowledge, healing, clarification of motivations	Interpretation of personal history
Configured	Identity formation in Christ	Vocational discernment
Tempered	Responsibility, resilience, perseverance	Accompaniment through trials
Sent	Apostolic availability and mission	Discernment of missionary call

Through these pedagogical and accompaniment strategies, Claretian formation becomes a **living process of transformation** in which the candidate learns to interpret his life in the light of the Gospel, grow in responsible freedom, integrate the various dimensions of his vocation, and respond generously to the mission of Christ.

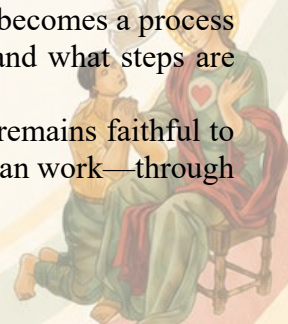
Final Insight

The foundational vision of Claretian formation calls for a formative process that does far more than transmit knowledge, enforce discipline, or prepare candidates for specific ministerial roles. Its deeper purpose is to **awaken authentic freedom, deepen personal and vocational identity, and prepare missionaries for a lifelong journey of transformation in Christ**. Formation is therefore understood as an interior process in which the person gradually becomes capable of responding to God's call with increasing clarity, maturity, and generosity. Rather than producing externally compliant individuals, the formative journey seeks to shape men whose freedom has been purified, whose identity is rooted in Christ the Missionary, and whose lives are oriented toward the service of the Gospel. In this perspective, the goal of formation is not simply the completion of stages such as novitiate or studies, but the emergence of a missionary who remains open to continual conversion, capable of learning from experience, and ready to be renewed again and again by the action of the Spirit.

Within this vision, the role of the formator acquires a depth that goes beyond the traditional functions of teacher, supervisor, or administrator. Formators are called to become **interpreters of experience**, helping candidates read their personal history, relationships, struggles, and aspirations in the light of God's action. They assist the formandus in recognizing how moments of consolation, conflict, failure, and growth become part of the formative work of the Spirit. By guiding this interpretive process, formators help candidates move from superficial self-understanding toward a deeper awareness of their motivations, wounds, resistances, and desires, enabling them to integrate these elements into their vocational journey.

At the same time, formators serve as **discerners of growth**, attentively accompanying the candidate as he progresses through the developmental movements of the Forge. They observe how the person is being purified in truth, configured more deeply to Christ, tempered through responsibility and challenge, and gradually prepared for mission. Through patient dialogue, realistic evaluation, and pastoral wisdom, the formator helps the candidate recognize both areas of authentic growth and areas that still require deeper integration. In this way accompaniment becomes a process of helping the formandus understand where he stands in his formative journey and what steps are necessary for further maturation.

Formators are also **guides of the Forge process**, ensuring that formation remains faithful to its transformative purpose. They create environments where the fire of the Spirit can work—through



prayer, community life, apostolic engagement, and reflective dialogue. They encourage experiences that challenge and refine the candidate's character, while also providing support and discernment when difficulties arise. By balancing encouragement with honest confrontation, they help the formandus remain within the formative process rather than withdrawing from it or seeking superficial solutions.

Ultimately, the task of formation is to accompany persons who are gradually becoming **missionary disciples configured to Christ and sent for the service of the Kingdom**. This configuration is not achieved once and for all but unfolds through the entire course of life. The missionary continues to be purified through new experiences, reconfigured through deeper conformity to Christ, tempered through trials and responsibilities, and sent into ever new missionary horizons. The formative vision therefore prepares missionaries not only for the beginning of ministry but for **a lifelong journey of conversion, discernment, and apostolic availability**, enabling them to remain faithful and fruitful in the ever-changing contexts of the Church and the world.

