

**Formation program for Oblate Brothers**  
**Approved by the Superior General and Council, 2013**

Preamble

The General Chapter of 2010 passed a resolution requiring that common standards in the first formation of Oblate Brothers in the Congregation be addressed. The project was to be carried out in dialogue with the Presidents of Regional Conferences, the General Formation Committee and the Standing Committee of Oblate Brothers.

The General Norms for Oblate Formation promulgated by the Superior General on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2011 have responded to a large extent to this Chapter resolution. At its meeting in March 2012, the General Formation Committee, in the light of the General Norms, worked on a first draft of common standards for first formation of Brothers which was then sent to the Standing Committee of Oblate Brothers for their meeting in November 2012 in Rome. The Standing Committee of Oblate Brothers proposed some changes. The text was again studied during the meeting of the General Formation Committee in February 2013 in Godfrey, IL, USA. Following some further minor revisions, this text was finally approved by the Superior General in council in October 2013 in Rome.

“As members of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Brothers are united in the same charism and are full missionaries. Within this charism, they develop a special identity at the level of being and of mission, thereby calling for a formation that is both common and particular”. (cf. General Norms for Oblate Formation, n° 395)

In the following document, we want to highlight the important elements for each stage of the formation to religious life of Oblate Brothers, starting with vocations ministry. Since the 2011 edition of the General Norms for Oblate Formation contains detailed information on Oblate formation, we have avoided unnecessary repetitions. We invite you to read and understand this program within the specifications of the General Norms in the various stages of Oblate Formation and in the light of our Constitutions and Rules.

- **Vocation Apostolate**

- Contents (cf. General Norms for Oblate Formation 78-105, 390)
- Who? Oblate Brother on the team (GNOF 93)
- Presenting Oblate life (it is important to highlight the basic vocation we share as Oblates, to present brotherhood and priesthood as equally valid options)
- Material: models of Oblate religious life
- Celebrate Oblate Brothers: Antony Kowalczyk; Oblate martyrs
- Avoid expressions like “Oblate fathers”; use “Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate”
- Stress more “Oblate religious life”; “Consecration”; “Evangelization”; “Mission” and the many ways to preach and evangelize
- Presenting Oblate vocation as one – Oblate religious life should be emphasized: our common call to religious life.

- **Pre-novitiate** (cf. GNOF 156-162, 391)
  - Presence of a Brother on the team where possible, or one who is visiting regularly (GNOF 48)
  - Period of mutual knowledge before the novitiate: discovering what being an Oblate means
  - Sessions on the topic of vocation to brotherhood or priesthood. Discernment period: individual and group accompaniment on these topics.
  - Leave room to choose / to discern. Formators should not make the choice for the candidates
  - Deepening of one's vocation
  - Presenting figures of Oblate Brothers.
  - Pre-novitiate in one's culture. We should also address the cultural view of the Brother. Reflection and sharing on how the vocation of a religious Brother is seen, understood and valued in a given culture: highlight the good aspects and the limitations. Some of the cultural aspects may need to be challenged and evangelized when they discriminate against this vocation.
  - Pre-novitiate program is an essential stage of initial formation and would include among other things: the basics of discernment, methods of prayer, psychological assessment...
  - By the end of the Pre-novitiate program, candidates along with the pre-novitiate director should be able to give a clear indication of their particular direction regarding brotherhood or priesthood.
  
- **Novitiate** (cf. GNOF 163-203, 392-393)
  - Common Oblate program (cf. GNOF 163 – 203, 392 -393)
  - Presenting Brother figures
  - Presence of a Brother on the formation team where possible, or one who is visiting regularly (GNOF 48)
  - Presenting Oblate vocation as one – religious life should be emphasized. The whole reality of consecration
  - The common call to Religious life. Special attention should be given to what religious life is in the Constitutions and Rules:
    - **Chapter Two: Apostolic Religious Life;**
    - Section One: The Evangelical Counsels;
    - Section Two: Living in Faith;
    - Section Three: The Apostolic community

We should highlight these three dimensions of religious life and show how the Brothers have a special grace to live this reality.

- Highlight OMI values / mission
- At the end of novitiate the Brother candidate should review his life and commitment with the formators and his major superior or delegate, so that the candidate and the congregation could anticipate what kind of formation would be necessary after novitiate.
- **Post-Novitiate** (cf. GNOF 204-242, 394)
  - Continuity of Oblate formation. Accompaniment should continue during this stage
  - Formation should take place in a formation context (with duly appointed formators)
  - Perpetual oblation preparation process should be followed (cf. GNOF 243-251)
  - Additional workshops could be organized at regional levels for Oblate Brothers on various topics
  - Period: how many years? The period that is necessary according to each Unit or region
  - A celebration of some sort should take place when the candidate makes perpetual oblation to give greater prominence to perpetual oblation and first obedience.

### **The 5 pillars of Post-novitiate formation** (cf. GNOF 106-154)

- First pillar: human aspect
  - Equilibrium in life
  - Developing capacities for sound interpersonal relationships and community living
  - Discernment tools for the mission
  - Developing listening skills
- Second pillar: spiritual aspect
  - Rereading his own journey in the light of the Gospel
  - The human reality of “brother” as a way to understand the spirituality of being an Oblate Brother.
    - Learning from the family psychology about “brothers” to help us deepen the spirituality of being a Brother
    - Learning from Biblical stories on “brothers”: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, the first Christians as “brothers”.
    - Short stories and anecdotes on “brothers”

- All of this as a point of departure for meditation, reflection and inspiration for grasping the spirituality of Brothers
- The spirituality of the Brother and the Brothers in mixed communities.
- Third pillar: Oblate charism aspect
  - Apostolic religious life:
    - Following Jesus, consecration, evangelical counsels, living in faith
  - Apostolic community
  - missionary identity
  - priesthood of Jesus Christ
- Fourth pillar: intellectual aspect
  - Philosophy
  - Bible
  - Theology
  - Oblatology (cf. GNOF 399)
  - Social doctrine of the church
  - Sociology, psychology and human sciences
  - Professional training in view of the mission
- Fifth pillar: pastoral and missionary aspect
  - working experience with people
  - poor and most abandoned
  - Regency experiences (preferably in an Oblate community environment and outside of one's culture and/or unit).