

Day 5. 06.20.2022 (Monday)

TOPIC: Formation of the Association of the Holy Family

Day started differently than planned due to the detection of another, fourth case of Covid-19. During the first session, representatives of individual provinces met with Sister Speranza, to discern together and decide whether to continue or close the meeting. It was decided that the meeting would continue with all possible precautions.

The prayer before the meeting in the form of a chaplet to the Holy Family was led by Małgosia and Tomek Gniadzik from the AHF in Warsaw.

All sessions on this day were devoted to formation in the Association of the Holy Family. The day was animated by Bożenka and Janusz Malec from AHF in Warsaw.

Session 1.

Presentation of formation in individual provinces – Sisters Directors of the AHF In the Provinces

The Sisters Directors of the AHF in each province presented what formation looks like during the year. They answered according to the following questions:

The program of permanent formation of the members of the AHF, approved by the General Administration, provides for an eight-year thematic cycle. Is it being implemented?

a) If the meetings are held according to a formation program:

- What is the outline of formation meetings? Who runs them?
- What do Sisters use while preparing for the meeting?
- What difficulties do Sisters encounter in the implementation of the program?
- Do the formation meetings according to the formation program help the members of the AHF to: deepen their faith and live according to it, do they want to spread the mission of Nazareth, want to share the faith with others?
- How does the involvement of members of the AHF in the implementation of the formation look like?
- What percentage of the proposed annual formation is implemented throughout the year?
- What comments and observations do the Sisters have regarding the implementation of the program?

(b) If the formation program of the AHF is not carried out during the meetings:

- What is the reason for not implementing the formation in this form?
- What is then the nature/form of the meetings of members of the AHF and friends of the AHF?

The most important information about formation by province:

United States

In the Province of the Holy Family, formation is carried out throughout the year during meetings and/or through materials sent to the members of the AHF in monthly newsletters. These meetings are usually led by the Sisters. From time to time, someone is invited to give a lecture, but members appreciate when they can listen to the Sisters.

The materials used in the meetings focus on the celebrations of the Congregation and/or the celebrations of the liturgical year. We use the documents of the Congregation, the documents of the Church and various spiritual writings.

We hope that each session brings with it a certain aspect of growth for each member of the Association. Our goal is to inspire each of them with the spirit and enthusiasm of Nazareth, so that they may have the desire to share this experience with others.

Cracow

We have been implementing a formation program for several years, this year it was the fourth year of formation of the AHF. Meetings usually follow the format proposed in the new outlines. Conferences are given by the priest, sisters responsible for the meeting, or invited guests. The participants of the meetings willingly join the liturgy of the word. Sharing faith, what we experience, how we live, what moves us, usually takes place over cup of coffee.

Formation meetings help members to explore and live a specific theme, to broaden their knowledge of the faith and to be open to others. This can be seen through the initiatives undertaken (courses for married couples and for parents), the witness of life towards others, the sharing of spiritual and material goods.

Belarus

In every community of the AHF there is a very similar pattern of meeting: Holy Mass, conference, time to share thoughts, as well as sharing what recently we have been doing, refreshments are being served during the meeting.

In Belarus, we have already gone through an eight-year series of meetings. Sometimes the priests who are leading our groups and the participants themselves point out that some topics are repeated. We face such a problem that we lack materials that could help us to prepare conferences, because there is a lack of theological literature in Belarusian.

The second problem is related to the fact that new families are joining. It is often necessary to balance between those who have already had the appropriate formation and beginners. The topics addressed during meetings also depend on the community of the AHF. In beginner groups, we start conferences with the basics of faith.

France

The whole program was implemented earlier. We see difficulties in undertaking unified formation for new families and those who have been in AHF for a long time and have already participated in formation program.

Our concern is the lack of priests who can address certain issues.

We want to start the formation program anew.

Philippines

In the Philippines, the program is not as structured as in other provinces. This is due to the great commitment of many Sisters in various other works of the community.

Meetings are usually held on the 3rd Sunday of the month. It is the Holy Hour (prayer, brief reflection). After that, there is a conference (according to the gospel readings), sometimes sharing in a small group, sometimes sharing it all together.

Members of the AHF value sharing together. Many young people want to take part in the Holy Hour thus learning Nazareth.

Australia

In preparing meetings, we use what is current in the Church or in the liturgical year. We share topics and materials with other groups. The content of the association's meetings is consistent with the formation program.

Members of the Association meet every two months. Sometimes meetings are led by the director of the Association, sometimes a speaker is invited to conduct spiritual reflections for members of the AHF.

Since the program is being discussed with the Associates, according to their suggestions and needs, members of the AHF believe that this is helpful in deepening their faith and encourages them to spread the mission of Nazareth as well as to share their faith with others.

Meetings include time for social gathering, prayer, time for reflection and sharing, and end with a light meal together.

Warsaw

The formation program approved by the General Administration for the AHF has been implemented in the Warsaw Province for many years. Since 2017 according to newly developed outlines. Members in an anonymous survey admitted that formation meetings are very valuable to them and help them to deepen their faith, deepen their life of prayer and sacramental life, as well as to help them to grow in married and family life. The strengths of annual formation include sharing the faith and growing together in faith, analyzing and deepening Sacred Scripture together, conversations in groups during sharing. They also emphasize the value of a cyclical program that allows you to rediscover the same content and the fact that everyone can develop at their own pace, without pressure, at every stage of their lives.

The members pointed out that the meetings of the local community of the AHF stimulate gratitude for the gift of life in the family and teach them to take up responsibilities towards their family and the Church, while through formation they grow towards being better in their married life.

Discussing the annual formation, members of the AHF expressed concern of not having enough time for sharing in small groups. In addition, specific formation for older children (younger youth, up to 15 or 16 years old) has to be developed, and regular community formation needs to address members of the AHF over 60 years old.

Session 2.

Presentation of assumptions, goals and formation program – Sr. Maksymiliana Dojcz and Bożenka and Janusz Malec

Formation of the Association of the Holy Family

The members of the AHF form a spiritual family with the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, united by charism and mission. This is why the charism of the AHF is almost identical to the CSFN charism.

CHARISM of the AHF:

We, the members of the Association of the Holy Family of Nazareth, in communion with the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, are called to spread the Kingdom of Divine Love among ourselves and others by following Jesus, Mary and Joseph, whose lives were centered on the love of God and love for one another. We bear witness to this love through prayer and dedicated service to the Church, especially to the mission of the family.

The need for a permanent uniform formation for the entire AHF has been reported by the Sisters Directors for a long time. During the international meeting of the Sisters Directors in 2007 in Żdźary, Poland, our late Sister Klara Żygo presented program developed by a group of sisters from the Province of the Name of Jesus, which was implemented in the province of Warsaw. During this meeting, the Sisters accepted the proposed program and also developed a set of 10 themes for each formation year.

The permanent formation of the AHF has been assembled in an eight-year cycle and covers the following topics:

1. Fiat Voluntas Tua
2. The Holy Family, our model
3. Following Jesus of Nazareth
4. With Mary in our families
5. Under the protection of Saint Joseph
6. Living the power of the Holy Spirit
7. The family as a Domestic Church
8. Spreading the Kingdom of God

The theme of formation closely refers to the symbolism of the coat of arms of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth. These symbols, developed by Blessed Mary of Jesus the Good Shepherd, express the Spirituality of Nazareth that members of the AHF are invited to discover.

CSFN COAT OF ARMS and THE ANNUAL FORMATION OF AHF

In the blue field of the shield, in the middle there is an isosceles *cross*; at the intersection of his arms we see a silver circle with a *Christogram* (a combination of the first two Greek letters [Ch + P = Chr.] symbolizing Christ in the form of an acronym, i.e. an abbreviation) and with the letters Alpha and Omega. The Cross is the image of Jesus as the Beginning and End of all things. **Following Jesus of Nazareth**

Behind the cross, we see crossed obliquely: a *lily with a silvery flower*, a stem and golden leaves - illustrates the Blessed Virgin Mary. **With Mary in our families**

Moreover, the *golden scepter*, which describes St. Joseph of the royal line of David. **Under the care of Saint Joseph**

The cross, lily and scepter represent the Holy Family. **The Holy Family is our model**

The Cross is located between a *silver dove* descending in the glory of the golden rays at the top, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit, the author of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Love that is to fill our hearts, enliven communities and radiate to those around us. **Live the power of the Holy Spirit**

And a golden papal tiara placed on the keys, of the same color, at the bottom. *The tiara and the keys of Peter* are a symbol of our fidelity and devotion to the Church and the Holy Father. **The family as a Domestic Church**

The shield is *covered with a scarlet cloak conquered* with an ermine, topped with an open *crown*, decorated with stones - they signify the Kingdom of Divine Love, which is to grow in our soul and in the souls of others. **Spreading the Kingdom of God**

At the bottom of the coat of arms there is a *ribbon with the motto: FIAT VOLUNTAS TUA*. These words are the motto of the Congregation, a brief presentation of the essence of Nazareth holiness and a principle of conduct – interpreted by our Foundress in contemplation of the life of the Holy Family – which each of us accepts as our own. **Fiat Voluntas Tua**

GOALS OF FORMATION:

- Building the foundations of a personal spiritual life in a deep relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Discovering the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for shaping family life; establishing a close relationship with Jesus, Mary and Joseph – inviting them to "dwell" in our families.
- Awakening the desire to spread the Kingdom of Divine Love in ourselves, in our families and in our environments where we live and work, through the witness of life and love and service to married couples and families.

- Rooted in the Church, in the sacramental life, in personal, marital and family prayer.
- Awakening love for the word of God, living according to it.
- Discovering one's personal, married and family path to holiness in imitation of Blessed Nazareth's Sisters.

WAYS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS:

- Meditating on the Word of God, Collectively and Individually
- Conference
- Meeting and sharing in groups
- Tasks for Individual and families

The aims of formation are also realized, if possible, through other forms of meetings:

- weekly retreats according to the theme of a given formation year;
- various thematic workshops, for example, discussing topics from psychology, family and marriage, raising children, etc.;
- days of recollection or retreats for specific groups, with a properly selected plan and theme, e.g. retreats for seniors or workshops for mothers and fathers, weekends for brides, etc.

NOTES on the implementation of the formation program for the AHF:

There is a possibility, and sometimes even a necessity, to introduce other topics due to differences resulting from the local situation and the possibilities (spiritual level) of the candidates, or associates. If, according to the discernment of the director in a given province, in a particular group it is first necessary to first discuss and present the essential content of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, then it is impossible to begin with a "big theology"...

Other proposed topics include:

- Sacraments of the Church
- Documents of the Church (especially the current ones concerning the family)

Regardless of how and what materials are proposed in a given group, at some point the group should implement the main topics from the eight-year cycle. Materials can be selected according to the capabilities and needs of the group.

EVALUATION OF THE FORMATION PROGRAM

During the international meeting of the Provincial Directors of the AHF in March 2017 in Rome, a decision was made to evaluate the existing formation materials. This task was entrusted to Sr. Maksymiliana Dojcz, director of the AHF, in the Province of Warsaw in cooperation with the Province of Kraków.

TEAM: The materials were developed by sisters and spouses from the provinces of Warsaw and Kraków in cooperation with Rev. Prof. Jacek Goleń KUL Lublin and Rev. Prof. Andrzej Pryba MSF from Poznań, as well as with biblical consultation with Rev. Dr. Zbigniew Dykiel MSF.

DIAGRAM of each outline:

I. Formation goals (*what is the purpose of each meeting, what is worth paying attention to?*)

II. The Word of God (*texts from Old Testament and New Testament*)

III. Church Teaching and Commentaries

Current documents of the Church (*documents of the Second Vatican Council, encyclicals, exhortations, apostolic letters of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis, Catechism of the Catholic Church, homilies of popes*)

IV. Questions for personal reflection (*reflection in the context of the word of God concerning my life with God, with loved ones*)

V. Questions for group work (*application in life, or how can I relate the word of God to my life, to my relationships, to the community in which I live*)

VI. From the Treasury of the Congregation (Thoughts, Letters of Blessed M. Franciszka Siedliska, *The Way of Love. The Ratio of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth and the Law of Love. Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth*).

VII. Tasks for the family (*proposal for joint reading of the word of God, prayer, conversation, reflection, action in the light of the topic*).

VIII. Reading (possibly).

All 80 outlines have been redesigned according to the above scheme.

ADVANTAGES OF FORMATION of the AHF

GENERAL ADVANTAGES

- uniform, orderly formation in all communities of the AHF
- awareness of the goals we want to achieve,
- cyclical topics give the opportunity to repeatedly return to the content of a given year, because there can always be a different approach, a different priest, a different group, different circumstances in which the content is presented,
- cyclicality allows everyone to grow at any time, according to their openness, possibilities – we give space of freedom to the Holy Spirit to "touch us where he wants".

TEACHING

- always a focus on the word of God, which "is alive and effective, capable of judging the thoughts and desires of the heart" (cf. Heb 4:12),
- reference to documents of the Church which may inspire the priest or sister leading the conference,
- although there are specific suggestions set by the goals and documents of the Church, there is freedom in the choice of content or emphasis on given content,
- the certainty that we remain in the teaching of the Church,
- broad understanding of the foundations of the Catholic faith, on which spiritual life can be built,
- a balance between the different aspects of teaching, because it is about the Holy Spirit, and about Mary, and about the Church, about the liturgy.

NAZARETH SPIRITUALITY

- emphasis on the Holy Family and on references to it (four years) in various aspects,
- great pressure on Nazareth – we form not only a Christian, a Catholic, but also a man of Nazareth,
- a simple invitation to the path to holiness on the example of Blessed Sisters of Nazareth,
- small groups – the questions relate to the way of realizing the charism of the AHF in our lives, building a community between us, joining the mission of the Sisters of the Holy Family Nazareth.

REFERENCES TO LIFE

- a small group – an opportunity to share faith, own experience, as well as to build a community of people who think the same, support each other, open up to each other,
- questions in a group and for individual reflection bring teaching into practice, allow me to look at how I implement the content of teaching in my life, how I live it, how I implement it in concrete terms,
- a lot of questions related to the mission, testimony in your family, environment where I live and work – they are a challenge, an encouragement to spread the Kingdom of God's Love,
- a few (two-three) questions leave freedom in sharing, everyone can choose this question that they want to share,
- the questions are diverse, they are more general, but also personal, which is why it is easier for some to share their knowledge, reflection, their experience of faith with others.

FORM

- a place for meditation, individual reflection, as well as for sharing together in a group,
- encouragement to work personally, in the family, to talk, reflect, to continue being spiritually active between meetings during the year.

Each participant received two outlines in Polish or English to familiarize themselves with a plan of typical meeting. These were one outline from year II "The Holy Family as our model" and one outline from year VIII "Spread the Kingdom of God".

Session 3.

Conclusions, reflections on the formation of the AHF

This session began first with work in groups at the provincial level, after that the representatives shared the most important reflections regarding the formation program of the AHF:

Australia/USA

1. It is important to emphasize why we come, why we are in AJHF, as well as meeting each other where we are.
2. We need to create a network of relationships with each other, for example by using the opportunity to visit communities (as happens in other provinces) to enrich each other.
3. In our groups of the AHF there is lack of information, what do new members expect when they come to the meetings, what should be the structure of the meeting? It is important to remind ourselves that we want to work together, to follow the same path. We come to the Sisters as members – let's say what is our need, our expectation.

Belarus

1. The outlines are well developed, extensive – this is what we expected, this is what we lacked in Belarus. We only need to translate them into Belarusian.
3. It is then important to disseminate the outlines among the responsible Sisters, priests – these are some of the difficulties, but we want to undertake it.
4. We will also collect feedback on the formation and its implementation in individual groups.

Philippines

1. The situation is different in the Philippines, where we have to reach people on different islands differently. A common formation is possible, but we must adapt it to a concrete community.
2. We must listen to the needs of a given group, respond to their needs, give them ourselves, because it is not possible to have the same approach in every group. What is needed, then, is a different path, a different dynamic. Sometimes it is an individual work with the family during meetings, conversations.
3. In the Philippines there are families who work partly abroad, leave, we have to support them, children are often, for example, under the care of an extended family – this makes it a large percentage of those who leave AHF.
4. Large socio-economic differences between regions, sometimes the help we can offer is mainly material, then you can try to meet spiritual needs. Another situation regarding Carlos and Grace from the community in Manila – they have different needs, possibilities.
5. As the director of the AHF in the Philippines, I want to go everywhere, but it's impossible (finance, distance, pandemic) – these are big challenges.

Cracow

1. Strengthen the formation of children and adolescents; parents are believers, and children sometimes leave the Church. Create environment to support these parents.
2. The Holy Hour (the hour of prayer to expiate for sins) was Blessed Mother Frances Siedliska's desire that Sisters would cultivate that devotion. Such an hour of adoration is a challenge for us to take up in our communities.
3. Materials are selected to the capabilities and needs of the group, sometimes the topic of the meeting is secondary due to current needs of the group. Then we do not have a sense of neglect.
4. It is worth including more information about mother Foundress in the formation manual. Families are interested in information about the Congregation.
5. We confirm that the cyclicity of the formation program is very good. It does not bother us that it is repeated. We are in a different moment of life, there is a different "soil", different conditions and the word comes in and bears fruit.

France

1. Expressed gratitude for the formation materials, for the involvement of sisters and members in the process of evaluation of these materials. It is a great work of both sides.
2. We know what we can use now.
3. We want to walk together towards the Holy Family. We want to work on the basis of materials – we want to convert a little. Let us walk together in this formation, we have the same values!