“Dedicating your time to prepare future priests is one of the best things you can do with your spiritual fatherhood as a priest.”

Msgr. Jorge Patrón Wong, Secretary of the Congregation for the Clergy at the Vatican, directed this remark to 49 priests attending a weeklong workshop on the spiritual formation of candidates for the priesthood. The priests traveled to Santa Croce from eleven countries where they assist seminarians preparing for the priesthood. Seminaries from Brazil and Italy had the most attendees, followed by Spain, Mexico, Chile, Portugal, Slovenia, Argentina, Slovakia, El Salvador, and Belgium.

Observing formation activities around the world is part of Msgr. Wong’s responsibility at the Vatican, so it was fitting that he should give the workshop’s opening remarks. He encouraged everyone by reminding them that training candidates for the priesthood is “something that lasts for life – and something that changes lives.”

WORKSHOP THEMES

Of the fourteen talks and workshops, seven were led by faculty from Santa Croce and The Center for Priestly Formation. The morning schedule usually included two talks on the theme for the day, while the afternoons allowed more active interaction in a workshop format. Reflecting together on practical problems from a variety of cultural contexts gave the participants the benefit of sharing personal experiences.

The first morning focused on the overall topic of spiritual formation with talks by the Most Reverend Jose Maria Yanguas, Bishop of Cuenca (Spain), speaking on “Priestly Spirituality”, and Prof. Msgr. Luis Romera, Rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross speaking on “Spiritual Formation.” The afternoon workshop on “Readings for Spiritual Formation” was led by Rev. Prof. Laurent Touze of Santa Croce (see...
HOW TO PREPARE HOLY PRIESTS

Continued from page one

page 4 for more information about this workshop).

The next day’s theme was “From the Word to the Sacraments” with morning talks on “The Life of Prayer”, “The Life of Penance”, and “Eucharistic Life.” The afternoon workshop was on retreats and spiritual exercises.

Other talks through the week included: Education for Chastity, Education for Communion, Education for Spiritual Fatherhood, and Psychology and Spiritual Direction.

Fr. Philip Goyret, Vice-Director of the Center for Priestly Formation, coordinated the workshop (for more about CPF, see our page 4 interview with Fr. Philip).

SEMINARY CHALLENGES

In the process of discerning how best to prepare seminaries to train candidates for the priesthood, the founders of CPF identified two problems. First, for many years seminaries were entrusted to religious congregations who trained seminarians in the context of their own particular spirituality rather than the spirituality needed by a diocesan priest. Little by little, this has changed in many dioceses as the formators in seminaries were replaced by secular (diocesan) priests.

The second problem was that secular priests were not always qualified for the task. Furthermore, in the years when vocations to the priesthood were low, many bishops saw their main priority as providing enough priests to serve the parishes. Therefore, in addition to not being prepared for the task, the formators in the seminaries may have been working part-time at a parish and part-time at the seminary with many responsibilities.

It is the goal of CPF to help correct this situation by training seminary formators and providing tools and resources that can help even those who are not able to travel to Santa Croce. If a good staff can be prepared for the seminaries then, with time, there will be more well-trained priests with good formation.

INTEGRAL FORMATION

This year’s workshop is part of The Center for Priestly Formation’s four-year program dedicated to four aspects of seminarian formation stipulated by the Church: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The workshop on spiritual formation is the second topic in the program, with workshops on the intellectual and pastoral aspects to be scheduled in the future.”

Rev. Prof. Paul O’Callaghan, from Santa Croce, gave a talk on “The Role of Spiritual Direction.”

From left to right: Rev. Prof. Eduardo Baura, stable professor of General Part of the Canon Law, former Dean of the Faculty of the Canon Law (1999-2007), Director CPF; Bishop Juan Ignacio González Errázuriz, of Bernardo, Chile; Bishop José María Yanguas, of Cuenca, Spain; Rev. Prof. Philip Goyret, Professor of Dogmatic Theology, Vice-Rector of Santa Croce, and Vice-Director of CPF; Archbishop Jorge Patrón Wong (Official of the Congregation for the Clergy, Secretary for Seminaries), Consultant of the Congregation for Bishops and Referendary at the Supreme Court of the Apostolic Segnatur; Prof. Msgr. Luis Romera, Rector of Santa Croce, stable professor of Metaphysics, President of the Conference of Rectors of the Pontifical Universities of Rome.

Asking questions and reflecting together on practical problems gave participants the benefit of one another’s personal experiences.
IDEAS FROM THE LIFE OF PENANCE

Penance is a fundamental behavior of a Christian with five main elements which can be found in the Gospels:

1. **Awareness** and the sincere recognition of sin (Lk 15:17-21).
2. **A humble appeal**, with faith and trust, in God’s mercy (Lk 18:13).
3. **Love** that regrets the past and wants to show this regret through concrete acts (Lk 7:47).
4. **A radical will for moral change** that will return the human heart to being simple and pure. To become like children (Mt 13:3) implies wanting a way out of sin.
5. **An ongoing effort** to regulate oneself according to the rules of the Gospel and the will of God (Mt 7:21).

Father Gámiz also outlined four stages of the development of penance:

1. **Penance**: An awareness of sin must become love for the Cross – mortification, in order to be faithful.
2. **Humility** to ask for God’s help, which becomes sincerity, avoiding a double life.
3. **Love** that shows itself through works, opening up new perspectives to relationships with others.
4. **Moral change** that restores innocence, leads to a life of turning away from sin which becomes a permanent way of life.

OPTATAM TOTIUS

THE DECREE ON PRIESTLY FORMATION

“The spiritual training should be closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral, and, with the special help of the spiritual director, should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their sacred ordination they should be accustomed to adhere to Him as friends, in an intimate companionship, their whole life through. They should so live His paschal mystery themselves that they can initiate into it the flock committed to them. They should be taught to seek Christ in the faithful meditation on God’s word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office, in the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the children, the sick, the sinners and the unbelievers. They should love and venerate with a filial trust the most blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as mother to the disciple by Christ Jesus as He was dying on the cross.”

(Octatam totius, 8)
Fr. Touze gave a talk on the first day of the Spiritual Formation Workshop entitled “Reading for Spiritual Formation”. Above all, the Bible is essential for a Christian to read and he quoted the famous words of St. Jerome, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

An important source for the “classics” of spiritual reading and devotional practices is the book Modern Devotion (Devotio Moderna) which is not modern by today’s understanding. It was written in the late fourteenth-century. Thomas à Kempis’ book The Imitation of Christ uses principles he found in this earlier book, stressing a personal connection to God and showing love toward Him, particularly in the Blessed Sacrament.

More than a book, Modern Devotion was also the name of a religious reform movement calling for an increase in pious practices such as humility, obedience, and simplicity of life. One devotional method taught in this movement was to project oneself into the imagery of a Bible scene to participate in the life of Jesus. The “Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius of Loyola, as well as the teaching of St. Teresa of Avila, use this method of mental prayer.

Fr. Touze echoed the advice of the saints to set aside a fixed time for spiritual reading. Among the saints to promote spiritual reading was St. Josemaría Escrivá who wrote: “Don’t neglect your spiritual reading. Reading has made many saints... In my spiritual reading I build up a store of fuel. It looks like a lifeless heap, but I find that my memory, of its own accord, will draw from it material which fills my prayer with life and inflames my thanksgiving after Communion.” (The Way, n.116-117)

In his talk, Fr. Touze said that books can be among our best spiritual directors. Although reading intellectual books is essential for a priest’s education, reading the Fathers of the Church along with devotional classics is also important.

At the request of the Holy See, Fr. Laurent Touze wrote the book Mercy in the Teachings of the Popes. It is a short summary of the teachings of recent popes on the central message of the Jubilee. In the book’s preface, Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of The Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, wrote: “We are confident that the meditation of these pages will lead not only to reflect on the importance of mercy, but it will [inspire] the daily life of every believer in his responsibility to make the Gospel credible.”

There are eight books in this series published by Our Sunday Visitor in English. Free study guides can be downloaded from their website: www.osv.com
HOW DID THE IDEA OF STARTING A CENTER FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION (CPF) COME ABOUT?
Many bishops, who have sent their priests to Santa Croce for degrees, told us that they were very happy with the work that we do, and that their priests were returning to their dioceses well prepared to be good teachers. But they also said that they would like for us to prepare them to become formators of seminarians, to become spiritual directors, vice-rectors, rectors, dean of studies, etc. The Center’s Director, myself, and two other professors took the Bishops’ request and started this center. After presenting the idea to the governing board of the university, it was approved.

WHAT IS THE MAIN GOAL OF THE CENTER FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION?
The goal of CPF is to form priests to be formators. Here in Rome we have many activities for student priests. For example, we have a Master’s Degree in formation for future formators of seminarians, which takes place once a week in the afternoon. So priests who are doing a degree in Theology or Philosophy can also receive this formation in addition to their main study program. They go back to their countries with their academic degrees and also with this formation. This is our main goal.

DO YOU HAVE OTHER WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS?
We have held other workshops for priests in Rome who are already in charge of seminaries. There have been seminars on confession, preaching, and we are thinking of starting seminars on administration and management of seminaries and churches. The workshops are designed to be small in number, for around 50 or so priests, to be able to really dialogue and dig deeply into the subject in a practical way that’s meaningful to the participants.

ARE THERE ANY PROGRAMS OFFERED OUTSIDE ITALY?
For the past three years we have been extending our ideas outside of Italy. We organized a week-long workshop for rectors of seminaries cooperating with the Latin American Conference of Bishops. We sent a professor to Peru for a week-long workshop, which fifty rectors from seminaries attended.

Last summer we organized week-long workshops in Mexico, focusing on confession and spiritual direction in view of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. We had one week in Monterrey followed by a week in Ciudad Juarez, and the last week took place in Guadalajara. These workshops were a great success. In Guadalajara we had 650 participating parish priests! This is beautiful, because it shows that priests really want to grow in their formation as confessors.

Next summer we will travel to other cities of Mexico and parts of South America, it varies based on what people ask for. We also have projects planned for Brazil, the Philippines, India and the United States.

HOW DOES THE PREPARATION OF PRIESTS TODAY DIFFER FROM THE PAST?
Evangelization today is an evangelization in a world that has been Christian, but is not Christian anymore, and that is difficult. So we have to prepare priests for the new evangelization in a new context, not only of globalization, but a post-Christian modernity. That is why we need a different kind of preparation because things are not as they were before.

WHAT ARE SOME FUTURE GOALS?
We would like to build a website with documents, booklets and information about all the conferences that we do. For example, talks on the priestly life of prayer, spiritual direction, and spiritual reading. We want to have all of this material online and free for anybody who would like to read it.

WHAT DO YOU STILL NEED?
Our work is going very well, but we need help. Most importantly we need your prayers to help our initiatives. Also, we need students and donations to allow for sponsorships. I thank God that there are many people who have helped us, both those who send large contributions, and also those who give even twenty-five dollars every month.
I thank God for my strong faith – a direct result of the spiritual direction I received from excellent priests of Opus Dei who were formed at Santa Croce. They taught me to trust in God and, in the midst of life’s trials, I hung onto Him for life. I learned that God gives us the strength to handle anything and His grace is sufficient. My greatest hope for the Church is to have Santa Croce priests who are trained in spiritual direction serving in every diocese in the world.

As an adult, when I began working, I went to daily Mass. I don’t know why I did it... I certainly didn’t understand that Jesus was present in the Eucharist. But God was working in my life. I’m not proud of my young adult life but I was searching for love, and I finally found it. At age 26, I married a 39-year-old divorced man with 3 children. The only thing I knew was that he had a heart of gold which I had never experienced before. Someone must have told me that we couldn’t get married in the Catholic Church because my husband was not Catholic and was divorced. So we were married in a non-denomination-al Church.

Not long after our marriage, my husband’s oldest daughter had to enter a drug rehabilitation center and her four-year-old daughter came to live with us. After a few years we adopted our granddaughter because her mother was not improving. She was a handful to say the least. In addition to that, after my mom had a major stroke, my sister and I took care of her for 13 years – the last 4 years she was bedridden. I couldn’t have made it through those years without the expertise of an Opus Dei priest who carefully guided me through some difficult decisions.

During those years, my husband started taking instructions, began his annulment process, and we were married in the Church. I never in my wildest dreams ever thought this was possible. But God knew better than I.

My husband and I attended daily Mass for 10 years before he died 6 years ago. And that little girl of 4 is now 36 and has 5 beautiful children. If you want to know how the rest of my family turned out, my parents were married in the Church, my sister became a nun, my brother is a deacon, and my eldest brother came back to the Church before his death. Who would have thought that our family would end up so well?

That’s why I love the priests from Santa Croce so much. I truly do not know where I would be right now without them. They’ve been a lifeline to me throughout my life. My husband and I were so grateful that we began to donate in 1994 and I have never stopped and never will stop. If I had only had a widow’s mite I would give it to Santa Croce because they train holy priests.

I pray for each of you reading my story to consider making a monthly donation. Even the smallest amount will add up to give glory to God and help others through the great priests from Santa Croce.

Editor’s Note: Only a small percentage of our students are members of Opus Dei, but all of our students, diocesan seminarians and graduate student priests (the 3rd largest national contingent is from the United States) are formed and educated faithfully. As our Rector emphasizes, “We don’t need more priests – we need more holy priests!”
Many loyal supporters of Santa Croce choose to heighten the impact of their giving through becoming a member of our Sustainer Society. What are the benefits of becoming a partner in this elite group of committed supporters?

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Account Number _________________________
Exp. Date ________________________________
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Michael Gilstrap | Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Foundation | P.O. Box 4508 | New York, NY 10163-4508.
Our students are tremendously grateful for the unique opportunity they have to study at Santa Croce. They study with world-renowned thinkers, and they meet friends from every continent – all within an easy stroll of the Vatican, the Pantheon, and the countless other treasures of the Eternal City, and more importantly, all done for the glory of God and the good of His holy Church.

“As a student-priest, I am privileged to be studying in the heart of Catholicism. The Eternal City is so rich in history that I can feel, touch and see some of the places discussed in our classes!”
Fr. Michael Aguilar
Licentiate Communications
Diocese of Calbayog, the Philippines

“Christ and His call to holiness are central to all of our studies – giving us a rock-solid theological foundation. The professors live this out, approaching their teaching with this same seriousness and sense of calling.”
Michael Holmquist
Baccalaureate Theology
Colorado Springs, CO

“The Church needs to reach out more and more to the world, and this is why I am studying Institutional Communications, to serve the Church. A well-prepared priest can do great things for the Church!”
Juan Pablo Ayala
Licentiate Communications
Diocese of Tacámbaro, Mexico

Santa Croce’s current student body of 1,600 hail from 75 different countries!

On behalf of all our students, THANK YOU! Your help makes a world of difference!