



## Formation Secretariat

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### Meeting of the PCFs/RCFs (24th April, 2021):

An online meeting of the PCFs/RCFs was held on 24th April, 2021 to discuss on Covid19 crisis and the JCSA Apostolic Planning. All the members were present. **Fr Stany D'Souza**, the President of JCSA, addressed them in the context of the pandemic and the scholastics' return to their Provinces. Assessing the covid situation, he underscored that that we might have to streamline formation by setting up transitory mini-scholasticates in the provinces with mentors assigned.

The second part of the message of the President revolved around Conference Apostolic Planning. He acknowledged that REGAE process had resulted in two fruits: a) growth in Conference sense; b) Conference Apostolic Preferences; and c) Zonal Collaboration. Affirming that it was time for Conference Apostolic Plan, he exhorted the Secretariat to evolve one or two inter-provincial goal and to suggest a few activities.

In the third segment of his address, he emphasized the importance of formation in the Society. To leave a mark in the area of formation, he gave them three tips to be a good formator: constant discernment, continual accompaniment and continual appraisal.

The PCFs/RCFs gave voices to the sentiments of gratitude for dissemination of right decisions and right information at the right time by all common houses. Whenever

the scholastics could not travel back to their provinces, the host Provinces or the centres of study were gracious to continue to accommodate them. They said that solidarity in formation was very palpable in the pandemic year.

But they said that it had been a challenging time for Vocation Promotion, Pre-Novitiates and Novitiates. Vocation camps could not be held and candidates could not be brought to the Pre-Novitiates. Similarly, it was challenging to conduct Four-Sheets Exam. These challenges were being faced again in the second wave in 2021. Scholastics' summer ministries, summer programs, and vacations have been hampered. PCFs/RCFs expressed their concern that they have not been able to address their scholastics as a cohort regarding some common issues.

Subsequently, Stephen L Pragasam (MDU), Pius Kerketta (HAZ) and Wendel D'Cruz (BOM), the organisers of POP 2021 apprised the members about the program. There were 23 participants at Shembaganur, 39 at Sitagarha and 8 at the West Zone. Wendell reported that the face-to-face POP, planned at Khandala, was cancelled and an online program began from 23rd April as 5 Gujarat Scholastics got infected with covid19. Hence, there were only 8 participants. The members looked forward to normal POP 2022. Xavier Alangaram (DAR) affirmed that he would be ready to organise one in Kurseong in case of normalcy returning.

As has been agreed before, the **Annual Meeting of PCFs/RCFs** will be held in Kohima (Sept 30-Oct 4) if the situation



permits. **Anand Pereira (KHM)** said that the situation there was still volatile. The members were told to wait until June end for confirmation. In case of difficulty with the offline meeting, we will go for an online platform.

To President's exhortation regarding Apostolic Planning, there were various reactions. One said, "We already have apostolic plan for our provinces which will largely be accomplished in the common houses. Another Apostolic Plan might overburden the scholastics." Having had engaged conversations, the Formation secretariat has fixed 25th-26th June, 2021 for the JCSA Apostolic Plan. **Joe Arun (CEN) and Shajumon (Socius to POSA)** will animate the sessions.

### **Meeting of the PCFs/RCFs with Common House Rectors (29th May, 2021):**

Having received the information about commencing of the academic year 2021-22 in an online mode, a web colloquy of all the PCFs/RCFs and Rectors of the Common Houses was arranged on 29th May, 2021 to share and plan creatively and constructively for our formees. The principals of SN and VJ and the Superior of philosophers at DNC were also invited to this meeting. Some of the highlights of the meeting:

Formation in the Society stands on four pillars - human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual. It was said that the common houses could

take care of academic and the PCFs/RCFs would look after the other three areas of formation within their provinces until the scholastics go to the common houses.

The PCFs/RCFs preferred face-to-face spiritual direction within the provinces and not in an online mode. It would reduce screen load of the scholastics who seem to be overburdened with too many assignments.

The principals said that PCFs/RCFs needed to monitor their scholastics regarding their complain of too many assignments. Most of the exams are oral. It is difficult to understand that they are regularly burning midnight oil to do their assignments.

To the suggestion that online education could include more group discussions, it was reasoned that each institution was bound by a plan of studies approved by Congregation of Catholic Education (CCE). Basic systems of Catholic faith have to be taught at the BTh level as laid down by CCE.

Satya Nilayam, an ecclesiastical faculty, is affiliated to Madras University through Loyola College. Hence, for the academic purposes it abides by what Loyola College directs it. Satya Nilayam cannot rely only on oral exam. Hence, assignments are given. Furthermore, it was said that without adequate input and introduction to philosophy, group discussions would not be productive.

Those pursuing theological studies could be put in the mini-scholasticate under the care of a priest preferably one who has done MTh and not be left in different communities.



Scholastics could be encouraged to read few good books, study class materials, and to write articles. This is the right opportunity to make the students of theology to study local culture, local language, and their interaction with faith—inculturation and contextual theology.

We should not put too many things online like spiritual direction, online recreation, etc. The scholastics are in their respective provinces or communities. It would good opportunity for them to see in their own communities how the apostolic preferences are being lived out.

The PCFs/RCFs and the Rectors were reminded about the implementation of the graded syllabus on Ignatian Spirituality. For the implementation the local superior with spiritual directors and other staff members is in charge. PCFs will need monitor it for those Scholastics who remain in their provinces and the Secretary of Formation can monitor that in common houses.

In the same meeting, **Jossie D'Mello (KAR)** spoke about "Depths in the Spirit" – A Handbook for Spiritual Directees. Having heard about the content and scope of this booklet as well as its advantages and disadvantages, the PCFs/RCFs greatly appreciated it.

### **Webinar on Spiritual Direction (5th & 7th June, 2021):**

An online colloquium of the Spiritual directors of the Conference was organized on 5th and 7th June, 2021. Fifty-five spiritual directors participated in it. Welcoming the spiritual directors to the colloquium, **Fr Stany D'Souza (POSA)** said: "A director need to be familiar with God's ways, have the capacity to listen to and understand, and the skills to discern God's communication." **Arul Sivan (MDU) and Jossie D'Mello (KAR)** shared their personal experiences and expertise of accompanying people and showing them the way to God. Jossie also introduced to participants the handbook – "Depths in the Spirit." The Spiritual Directors found the inputs stimulating, enlightening and enriching. Their patient work of accompaniment is all the more vital as most of our scholastics stay behind in the provinces to attend their online education. Face-to-face spiritual direction will certainly lessen their screen time. It was heartening to learn that six PCFs have affirmed the introduction of the "Depths in the Spirit" to their scholastics.

It has been a challenging time for formation. We all hope that as the covid situation eases, the scholastics will be invited to the common houses in phased manner so that they benefit the formative value of being in the formation centres.