

**Obedient, Poor & Chaste:  
Assessing Readiness for the  
Mission of Jesus**

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**First Profession: A Time of Mutual  
Discernment**

- Novice/simply professed evaluates whether these vows help him/her to grow humanly and spiritually.
- The province or congregation evaluates whether the novice/simply professed is growing humanly and spiritually.
  - Does his/her behavior reflect greater freedom and availability to the community and to God's people?

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**Input for the evaluation:**

- Formator lives with them in community.
- Formator solicits information about them from others:
  - Their peers
  - The finally professed members of the community
  - Others:
    - Staff
    - Lay men & women in ministry with them
    - Professors at school, etc.
- Regularly scheduled one-to-one sessions with formator and formandi

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**The Vow of Obedience**

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**Human Development Issues for Obedience**

- **Autonomy & Power**
- **Authority**
- **Conflict management**

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**Autonomy & Power**

- **Autonomy has to do with the expression of one's "will".**
  - "Will...is the unbroken determination to exercise free choice as well as self-restraint...Will is the basis for the acceptance of law and necessity."
- **Free choice and self-restraint are another way of talking about a person's power and power experienced in the context of relationships—personal & communal.**

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### Personal Power

- **Awareness of myself as strong, as capable or coercive in interactions with others:**
  - Do they have a sense of their strengths & weaknesses?
  - Does they assert themselves too strongly?
  - Are they too passive or inhibited?

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### Social Power

- **Social power is the broader experiences of strength among us—the energy in the group/ community, the authority of the leadership and the community.**
  - **Social power involves an awareness of differences of strength among the the members of the community.**
    - How do they use their strengths in the development of community projects?
    - Are they open to the strengths and ideas of others?
    - Do they hold back their ideas and observations in community meetings?

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### Authority

- **Authority is an interpretation of power.**
  - Authorities (e.g., provincials, formators, etc.), laws, and customs arise from our judgments about power that get expressed in *The Rule*, a *Formation Manual*, etc.
- **Obedience is our response to these decisions about how power operates in the community.**
  - How well do they understand the formation process?
  - How do they talk about provincial and ecclesial leadership?
  - How do they respond to you as a formator?
  - How do they talk about their past experiences with authority figures?
- **Knowing our own approach to authority is important.**

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### Conflict

- Conflict between people is an inevitable part of human life.
- The formation issue is: How do they manage conflict when it occurs?
- 3 factors influence a person's approach to conflict:
  - I will/will not acknowledge the conflict.
  - I will/will not tell you what I think about the conflict.
  - I do/do not want to punish you for the conflict.
- Conflict occurs in relationships because a person's needs are not met.
- We bring our experience of managing conflict into religious life based on our experience in our family.

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### 5 Styles of Managing Conflict

1. "Avoidant/detached:"
  1. Will not acknowledge the conflict.
  2. Will not tell you what they are thinking.
  3. Does not want to punish you for the conflict.
2. "Passive:"
  1. Will not acknowledge the conflict.
  2. Might tell you what they think.
  3. Does not want to punish you for the conflict.
3. "Passive-aggressive:"
  1. Will not acknowledge the conflict
  2. Might tell you what they think.
  3. Does want to punish you for the conflict.

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### Styles of Managing, cont'd.

4. "Assertive:"
  1. Will acknowledge the conflict.
  2. Will tell you what they think.
  3. Does not want to punish you.
5. "Aggressive:"
  1. Will acknowledge the conflict.
  2. Will tell you what they think.
  3. Does want to punish you.

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**Formation Questions:**

1. Is their conflict management style helpful to relationships and in community living?
2. Do they need to work on particular areas?
  1. Do they need to acknowledge conflict when it occurs?
  2. Do they need to develop better communication skills in terms of talking about a conflict with the appropriate people?
  3. Do they need to stop punishing others for the conflict?

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**The Vow of Poverty**

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**Poverty in *The Rule***

- Use your Rule. Carmelite *Rule*, Chapter 12
  - Focuses on the common good
  - We share what we have with each other
  - “according to his need, with concern for the age and needs of each.”
- Fundamental questions:
  - Do they determine their needs with a sensitivity to the needs of the community?
  - Can they articulate their needs and balance them with the needs of the community?

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### Poverty & Human Development

- The vow links us to the economic sphere of human life:
  - What do I achieve in the economic sphere?
  - How thorough is my domination of the surrounding world?
  - Is the quality of my donation beneficent or evil, freeing or enslaving?
- 4 Areas of Evaluation in religious life:
  - The ability to share what they have.
  - The ability to live simply.
  - The ability to be detached.
  - The ability to be in solidarity with others.

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### Evaluation Questions:

- The ability to share what they have:
  - How well do they share what they have? Their time? Their possessions? Their interests? Their concerns?
- The ability to live simply:
  - To what extent do they live the vowed life in a simple manner?
  - How do they use community property?
  - Does they have a sense of entitlement, i.e., do they have the expectation that all their wants are to be met?

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### Evaluation Questions, cont'd.

- The ability to be detached:
  - Do they get excessively attached to their way of doing something, or a particular ideology, or a particular way of living Carmelite/Franciscan, etc., life?
  - Are they open to other ways of viewing life, doing a project, etc.?
  - How much flexibility do they have in their thinking and behaving?
- The ability to be in solidarity:
  - To what extent do they have an openness to and preoccupation with the poor?
  - Are they open to direct experiences of working with the poor?
  - Do they show openness to being in solidarity with the poor?

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### The Vow of Chastity

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### Focus

- What do we do in initial formation to develop skills for integrating sexuality and how do we evaluate the individuals in formation?

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### Components

- Critical Issues
  - Sexual identity
  - Sexual orientation
  - Kinds of sexual experiences
  - Sexual trauma
  - Problematic sexual behaviors

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**Ongoing Components for Each Stage of Formation**

- **Ongoing development and evaluation of beliefs about sexuality, intimacy and celibacy**
  - Integrating current experiences
  - Loss of biological mothering/fathering
  - Little experience vs. extensive experience

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**Ongoing Components, cont'd**

- **Determining personal behavioral limits in affection & self-disclosure**
  - In community and in ministry
  - Falling in love
  - Fantasy & masturbation
- **Develop viable personal relationship networks**

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**Ongoing Components, cont'd**

- **Share meaningful contacts with others who have similar lives & views**
  - In and outside of local community
  - Impacts of struggles w/ orientation issues
- **Identify and deal w/ existential loneliness**
  - How do they handle this experience?

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### Ongoing Components, cont'd

- **Appropriate self-care**
  - Too little?
  - Too much?
- **Pray as a sexual person**
  - Do they bring sexual issues to prayer and spiritual direction?
- **The Church and sexuality**
  - How do they understand Church teaching about sexuality?

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### Concluding Thoughts

- **If they don't introduce the topic, we have the responsibility to do so.**
  - Failure to do so sends a negative message about sexuality & celibacy.
- **In later stages of initial formation, ask:**
  - How do you experience this vow differently this year vs. last year?

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- **How important this topic is in a person's life depends on:**
  - Their sexual history
  - Their experience in community
  - Their experience in ministry
- **Your ongoing integration is important.**

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### Small Group Questions

1. What has been my experience of raising issues about obedience, poverty, and chastity in formation sessions and in preparation for final vows?
2. As I look at these questions and components, which one am I most comfortable addressing with our formandi? Which one am I least comfortable addressing with our formandi? What questions and/or components would I add or delete?
3. What changes might I want to consider in how our formation program works with evaluating our formandi for first and/or final profession?

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