

NAPCC Decisions about Initial Formation

10 May 2017

1. Re: evaluations of NAPCC formation programs

a) The job description of the OCIF first is to conduct an evaluation of NAPCC formation programs around May of each year, consulting the novitiate staff, the IPP staff, the current novices, the PDIFs, the NAPCC post novitiate directors, and representative samples from the men who have completed those programs within the past three years. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

b) Second, during the final week of the Interprovincial Postulancy Program (IPP), the OCIF will conduct an evaluation of that program alone with its staff. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

c) The convening provincial of the OCIF ought to circulate its reports immediately upon their composition to all affected parties, i.e., the IPP staff, novitiate staff, the NAPCC and the PDIFs. Should those reports include policy recommendations that need formal endorsement from the provincial ministers, the NAPCC will pursue that discussion at its next formal meeting. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

2. Re: Psychological evaluations

Neither the psychological evaluations nor the brief summary/recommendations of such are to be sent to the Novice Master when a postulant moves on to the novitiate. In case of need, the novice master can contact the respective (vice-) provincial minister for additional information. The Conference encourages adequate communication on core issues with the Postulancy/Novitiate. (NAPCC minutes October 20-22, 2012)

3. Re: Oversight Committee

The 3-1-3 group has been given a formal title, namely: Oversight Committee of Initial Formation (OCIF). (NAPCC minutes October 20-22, 2012)

4. Re: PDIF attendance at NAPCC meetings

At the Fall Meeting of the NAPCC, only the PDIF chairperson is required to meet with the NAPCC. However, any other members of the PDIF are cordially invited to attend if they so choose. (NAPCC minutes October 20-22, 2012)

5. Re: exceeding novitiate or IPP budget

The novitiate or IPP directors may authorize exceeding the budget in a single category by the lessor of \$5,000 or 20%. He is to submit a written explanation to the NAPCC chair (i.e, president) and the treasurer within the quarter succeeding the occurrence. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

The novitiate or IPP director must contact the NAPCC chair (i.e., president) and/or his delegate for authorization to exceed any category by either \$5,000 or 20%. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

6. Re: calculation of per diem charges

The per diem charge for the IPP and Novitiate programs will be set based on four novices fewer than the expected number of novices. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

7. Re: excess funds for the IPP or novitiate

Allowing for the withholding of one month's operating expenses, any excess novitiate or IPP revenue at the end of each year is to be returned to the contributing provinces in proportion to the amount they paid to support the novitiate program that year. (NAPCC minutes March 2-5, 2015)

8. Re: Regarding transitions to and from novitiate

That the postulant approved for novitiate, the formation novitiate staff and the formation advisor from the Postulancy have a three-way conversation early in the novitiate year to discuss the novice's formation past and goals. Such discussion may take place either in person or through technological means (Skype/teleconference) and will be initiated by the novitiate staff formation advisor. (NAPCC minutes April 6-8, 2016)

That the formation advisors from the novitiate staff be available for a three-way conversation about one's formation past and goals with the newly professed friar and the formation advisor from the respective provincial post-novitiate staff, should such a discussion be requested by the provincial post-novitiate staff member. Such discussion is to take place after the friar's arrival in post-novitiate and may use technological means (Skype/teleconference) to be achieved. (NAPCC minutes April 6-8, 2016)

9. **NAPCC Policies Regarding Absences from Novitiate
(Approved by the NAPCC at its meeting of March 8-11, 2017)**

A. Novitiate is a place, a program, and a community. The canonically established novitiate house for the NAPCC is located at San Lorenzo, within the Province of Western America (see can. 647 §1). All the other requirements of universal law in respect of the novitiate must be diligently observed (see Const. 31.7).

B. A canonical day is understood to be a space of twenty-four continuous hours which begins at midnight (can. 202 §1).

C. For validity, the novitiate must comprise twelve months, i.e., three hundred and sixty-five days spent in the novitiate community itself. The first day is not to be counted in the total, unless its beginning coincides with the beginning of the day (see can. 648 §1, can. 202 §1-2; can. 203 §1; Const 31:6).

D. Any absence of more than fifteen days, either continuous or broken, must be made up (see can. 649 §1; Const. 31:7).

E. The novitiate is invalidated by an absence of more than three months, continuous or broken (see can. 649 § 1; Const. 31:6-7).

F. Since “the governance of the novices is reserved to the director of novices alone, under the authority of the Major Superiors” (see can. 650 §2), both the Major Superiors and the Director of Novices share responsibility for diligently observing all the requirements of law with regard to the integrity of the novitiate year (see Const. 31.7). The Novice Director is responsible for informing the Major Superior, in a timely manner, of the computation of each novice’s absences from the novitiate community. Once informed of the number of absences, the Major Superior is responsible for ensuring that the canonical requirements are met in each case before admitting the novice to first profession. The respective Provincial Director of Formation is also to be informed.

G. It is the responsibility of the Major Superior to make arrangements for his respective novice(s) to make up the days of absence. The novitiate house (i.e., San Lorenzo) cannot accommodate itself for this purpose.

H. Since the NAPCC novitiate lasts, de facto, less than 365 days, at the beginning of the novitiate year, the Director of Novices is to inform each Major Superior of the number of days the novitiate will last if the novice is present for its entire duration. This is to be used as a base number for the computation of time spent in the novitiate, for computing time to be made up, and for the scheduling of a date for first profession.

I. The novitiate team shall include in its evaluations of novices the number of days each individual novice has been absent.

J. In addition, as absences occur, the novitiate team immediately shall notify the respective Major Superior and Provincial Director of Formation of the number of days absent. It is the responsibility of the respective Major Superior to see to the novice’s return to the novitiate as soon as possible.

K. It is the responsibility of the Major Superior, from the information given him by the novitiate team, to compute the total time a novice has been absent from the novitiate, to make provision for the novice to make up whatever time is required, to anticipate the date of profession as allowed by the canonical norms (see can. 649

§2), and to set the date of first profession assuring that all the requirements of law have been met.

L. Any part of the approved novitiate program that takes place at a venue other than the canonically established novitiate house, provided that the group of novices remains overnight in the same house, whether or not they are accompanied by a professed Capuchin, are not counted as absences. Since the elements of the novitiate program have been explicitly approved by the NAPCC, the consent and authorization of each of the member Major Superiors is to be presumed. Specific elements of the novitiate program which have been approved by the NAPCC and require no further permission include:

- i. the pilgrimage to the California Missions et al. to the San Francisco area;
- ii. attendance at the Los Angeles Religious Education Conference;
- iii. the Silent Discernment Retreat; and
- iv. the end-of-year Profession Preparation Retreat.

In addition, attendance at the Chapters of the novice's respective Province or Custody are to be considered part of the novitiate program. Assuming that the novice resides with the other friars of his jurisdiction during the Chapter, the days away do not count as absences from the novitiate.

M. It is the prerogative of the respective Major Superior to give permission for his novice(s) to be absent from the novitiate for other occasions, such as attendance at a Provincial/Custodial Chapter, a family event, etc. In the calculation, interpretation and praxis of these norms, the following assumptions are relevant: a) all Major Superiors will respect the integrity of the novitiate year, both in terms of the integrity of the program, as well as the integrity of the computation of time, in accord with Canon Law; b) the rights of the respective Major Superior over his jurisdiction's novices – be it a group or a single novice – remain intact; c) following the canonical rule of interpretation: “Odiosa sunt restringenda; gratiosa sunt amplianda”, each Major Superior enjoys the same rights over his jurisdiction's novices whether it be comprised of a group or a single novice. In either case, the Major Superior of the respective novice(s) may permit his jurisdiction's novice(s) to be away from the novitiate for the purpose of attending significant Capuchin- or family events. In keeping with our Constitutions (27.4), the Major Superior may permit the group of novices (or novice, if there is only one) to live for a certain period of time in another house of the Order specified by him. In such cases, the time away from the novitiate does not count as an absence. Furthermore, in an increasing number of circumstances events such as Provincial Chapters are not held in houses of the Order but at other venues. In such instances, as long as the novice(s), at the direction of the respective major superior, stay(s) with the fraternity, i.e., the friars, his time away from the novitiate does not count as an absence. In considering giving such permissions, Major Superiors should be conscious of the possibility of unforeseen absences due, for example, to hospitalizations, which could affect the number of days to be made up or even the invalidity of the novitiate year.

N. Since the NAPCC novitiate year is, de facto, less than the required 365 days in length, the days between the novice's leaving the novitiate house and his making first profession count as absences from the novitiate and must figure into the computation of time for the integrity of the novitiate year. The exception to this occurs only when, at the end of the novitiate year, a group of novices, with the approval of their respective Major Superior(s), spend the time "to be made up" in a designated house of the Order under the direction of a specified professed friar (see can. 647 §3).

Answers to various dubia:

Investiture: Does investiture "make" the first day of novitiate? Simply stated, no. Our Constitutions (31.2) state that a rite shall be celebrated asking for the help of God so that the aims of this period may be achieved. It is fitting [not required] that the novices receive "the clothes of probation" on this occasion. This rite shall be carried out as a record of the beginning of the novitiate, which is the beginning of life in the Order." In other words, some rite must be celebrated and a document drawn up, but the rite itself need not include investiture with the novice habit. Personally, I don't think anything is to be gained by not having investiture linked to the first day of novitiate. They have entered the period of probation, and it seems fitting that they be given the clothes of probation.

Overnight marks the meaning of absence (#2): This is a matter of longstanding canonical interpretation which has been legitimately accepted. Without some perimeters, too rigid an interpretation is possible, as well as a leniency which would make the talk of absences entirely moot. If a day is 24 continuous hours, what if the novice goes to the dentist or shopping or to a doctor (normally during the non-sleeping hours of the 24-hour period), does it vitiate the rest of the 24-hour period and count as an absence? The interpretation is based on reasonableness: it is more reasonable to expect the novice (as well as any friar) to be home at nighttime. Therefore, if the novice is away overnight, that is considered an absence.

Moving the arrival time up: The question of absences has never been adequately indicated by the experience of the novitiate team. What is the typical number of absences experienced by novices in recent years? If there is a perennial difficulty, then you could rectify the problem of absences either (or both) by dealing with moving up the arrival at novitiate, or delaying the date of first profession to assure compliance with the canonical norms.

A Group vs. One Novice: There is no difference in whether a jurisdiction has one novice or a group of novices. It is each Major Superior who exercises his rights over his jurisdiction's novice(s). Hopefully, #13 (above) clarifies this. The norms DO assume a group, but the canonical interpretation must be broad rather than strict (i.e., restrictive), which is why in # 13 the pertinent canonical rule of interpretation is stated ("Odiosa....").