

Formation



Watawa wa Taa





Formation

In your opinion, what are the non-negotiables in any formation program?

Formation centers on developing a deep, personal relationship with God through consistent prayer, spiritual direction, and a thorough understanding of the Congregation's charism, mission, and spirituality. Candidates are expected to fully internalize the evangelical counsels and live a life rooted in Scripture, sacramental participation, and Catholic doctrine. Human formation is equally important, with a focus on emotional maturity, moral integrity, community living, and intercultural competence. Formees are encouraged to embrace a life of simplicity, sacrifice, and service, while being supported through structured formation programs, personal accompaniment, and regular evaluations.

Community life is seen as essential, fostering solidarity, support, openness, and mutual respect. Candidates must be emotionally stable, self-aware, and willing to engage in communal responsibilities and relationships in a mature and respectful way. Formators, in turn, must be competent, emotionally balanced, and open to working with diverse personalities. There is also a strong emphasis on discernment at all stages, ensuring that the vocation is authentic and aligned with the Congregation's values.

“Community is the central point: understanding prayer together for one common goal and working in the vineyard together.”



The call goes hand in
hand with the mission
and charism of the
Congregation.

Challenges in formation include behavioral issues such as disobedience, inappropriate relationships, and lack of discipline. Candidates who cannot cope with communal living, show resistance to guidance, or display attitudes contrary to the Gospel may not be fit for religious life. Formation programs aim to address such issues with clear structures, ethical guidance, and spaces for reflection and correction.

Education, both doctrinal and theological, is a key component, along with training for apostolic and pastoral ministries. Modern realities are addressed through responsible use of social media, awareness of psychological challenges, and incorporation of tools such as psychotherapy.

Ultimately, **the formation journey is a holistic process**, combining spiritual, human, intellectual, and apostolic dimensions to shape candidates into integrated and committed religious individuals.



In your opinion, what aspects of formation (from your own experience or that of others in your Congregation) would you change and/or improve upon?



Spiritual Life and Prayer

- Improve balance between work and spiritual life; reduce busyness that affects prayer.
- Teach integration of prayer and work.
- Emphasize regular recollections and deeper scriptural formation.
- Enhance training in liturgy and sacramental life.
- Encourage daily journaling as a tool for spiritual awareness.



Formation Environment and Methodology

- Create formation environments with modern, eco-friendly facilities.
- Include contextualized, interdisciplinary ministry training.
- Update formation programs to address contemporary issues and needs.
- Move away from “one size fits all” approaches — tailor formation to individuals.
- Make formation more personalized and responsive to unique needs and gifts.
- Consider reducing long tenures of formators to maintain freshness and engagement.



Human Formation and Emotional Health

- Emphasize emotional intelligence, mental health awareness, and affective maturity.
- Include regular counseling, personal history work, and self-awareness seminars.
- Offer training on conflict resolution and intergenerational living.
- Foster diversity, equity, and respect among members.
- Formators must be role models — truthful, unbiased, emotionally mature.



Community Life and Relationships

- Encourage healthy, inclusive community building and relationships.
- Address tribal profiling, favoritism, and comparisons among members.
- Promote solidarity, respect, and intergenerational harmony.
- Avoid blacklisting and threats; ensure a welcoming, non-fear-based environment.
- Educate on the importance of interpersonal skills, integrity, and community sharing.



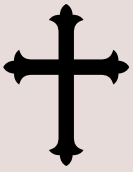
Technology and Media Use

- Offer structured guidance on responsible use of phones, social media, and electronics.
- Incorporate computer literacy and exposure to global happenings via TV and other media.
- Introduce distance learning to widen access to formation tools and content.



Practical and Life Skills Training

- Train formees in basic life skills such as cooking, farming, gardening, and cleaning.
- Introduce budgeting and financial literacy for personal and community use.
- Teach maintenance culture and sustainability through practical engagement.



Academic and Doctrinal Education

- Provide stronger catechetical, theological, and doctrinal education.
- Include ongoing learning on Church documents and contemporary secular issues.
- Add programs in religious studies, Congregation history, and vow understanding.
- Consider pre-novitiate extension for deeper foundational knowledge.



Assessment and Evaluation

- Use regular, compassionate evaluations focusing on growth and self-reflection.
- Incorporate psychological assessments with flexibility and sensitivity.
- Allow formees to express their journey and needs in assessments.
- Ensure yearly evaluations and background checks are standard.



Vocation Discernment and Formation Goals

- Keep focus on the true mission — following Christ — not just fulfilling duties.
- Enable formees to discover their identity and vocation through freedom and guidance.
- Help Sisters discern their talents and career paths, offering opportunities for growth.
- Reaffirm commitment to vows through better explanation and internalization.



Leadership and Formation Team Structure

- Vet formators carefully; ensure maturity, discernment, and non-authoritarian leadership.
- Have more than one formator or team-based formation.
- Include younger voices and experience in the formation leadership.
- Ensure consistent oversight and mentoring from leadership.



Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

- Promote interfaith, intercultural, and ecumenical dialogue.
- Use a lingua franca in multicultural communities to ensure clear communication.
- Respect cultural backgrounds and avoid discrimination or exposure of personal histories.
- Conduct family visits to better understand the context of candidates.



Logistical and Structural Improvements

- Consider giving a small personal allowance to novices to reduce feelings of deprivation.
- Provide fair and equal treatment to all candidates regardless of background.
- Ensure candidates meet minimum educational criteria.
- Create separate spaces for novices and professed members to encourage growth.



General Recommendations

- Discourage favoritism, jealousy, and competition.
- Encourage gratitude for past members and traditions.
- Support career development and skill upgrading.
- Prevent abuse of power and promote mutual respect across all levels.

What qualities are needed in a formator?

A formator should be a **deeply prayerful, God-centered** individual with emotional maturity, integrity, and a strong understanding of the Congregation's charism, spirituality, and history. She must be a **role model and mentor** — someone who leads by example, practices discernment, and embodies compassion, empathy, and patience. **Effective communication**, confidentiality, and interpersonal skills are essential, along with the ability to listen, guide, and **create a safe, trusting environment** for those in formation.

She should possess **sound judgment**, be **adaptable**, and able to provide holistic formation that meets intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and practical needs. **Leadership and mentorship abilities**, openness to cultural diversity, and the capacity to **collaborate** with others in the formation process are crucial. A formator must also be committed to her own ongoing formation, emotionally intelligent, and balanced — able to work with individuals of varied temperaments without becoming threatened or discouraged.

Above all, she should have a motherly, nurturing presence and the wisdom to support and challenge formees with love, fairness, and understanding.

“ She should be mature and prudent in the way of listening and the way of looking at things, and she should have the ability to keep secret what is shared with her. ”

“ Someone who knows very well the values of the Congregation will be able to transmit the charism and the spirituality. ”

“ The formation director should nurture and encourage those in formation, rather than being overly critical or discouraging. ”

“ A formator is a person of deep faith and conviction of her own calling. ”

“ She should be flexible enough in adapting formation methods to meet the needs of the times and diverse groups. ”

“ She has the ability to confront with love and gently correct. ”

“ She is forgiving and understanding of the youth generation. ”

“ She should have a deep spiritual life. ”

What topics are urgently needed in ongoing formation for those already in their vows?

The ongoing formation of those already in their religious vows requires urgent attention to several key areas to ensure their personal, communal, and spiritual development:

Spiritual and Theological Growth

- Deepening personal relationship with God and spiritual growth
- Continuing education in theology, Church teachings, and relevant Church documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Vatican II
- Ongoing formation in the charism and values of the religious Congregation
- Regular spiritual seminars, retreats, and spiritual direction
- Deepening commitment to the vows and integrating them into daily life



Community Life and Relationships

- Fostering community life as a central element of religious vocation
- Building strong interpersonal relationships within the Congregation, overcoming the intergenerational gap, and fostering harmony among members
- Training in conflict management, setting boundaries in relationships, and maintaining healthy communication

Mental Health and Self-Care

- Addressing stress, midlife crises, and emotional well-being
- Workshops on self-awareness, mental health, and healthy living practices, including coping with aging
- Training in emotional intelligence and self-care routines, especially in the face of physical, emotional, and psychological transitions
- Recognition of the importance of counseling and the need for formation in pastoral care.

Leadership and Governance

- Training in leadership and governance skills with a focus on authority as service
- Formation for those involved in leadership roles and those preparing to become formators
- Learning how to manage resources and finances responsibly, including transparency in handling funds
- Ongoing leadership development and preparation for transitions in leadership roles

Financial and Social Issues

- Education in basic financial management, including bookkeeping and responsible management of funds
- Awareness of social justice issues, advocacy, and engagement with contemporary societal challenges, including ecumenism, justice, and peace
- Training in the responsible use of social media, especially in avoiding scandals and maintaining confidentiality

Cultural and Technological Adaptation

- Integration of technology within the Congregation's ministry and apostolate, including use of digital tools for communication
- Addressing the impact of globalization, technology, and modern challenges on religious life
- Formation in intercultural competence, especially in multicultural and intergenerational communities

Personal and Vocational Development

- Ongoing discernment of vocation and understanding of vows and their significance in contemporary contexts
- Development of affective maturity, personal growth, and self-actualization
- Encouraging a continuous process of self-evaluation and accountability within the Congregation

Human Sexuality and Ethical Issues

- Addressing human sexuality in the context of religious life, with sensitivity and ethical understanding
- Formation in handling contemporary ethical dilemmas and understanding complex issues like artificial intelligence

Mission and Apostolate

- Encouraging missionary virtues, sustaining the apostolic mission, and continuing to serve in the spirit of those who have come before
- Ongoing education on civic and current issues relevant to the Congregation's mission, especially in a global context

Aging and Transition

- Preparing for aging gracefully, addressing physical, emotional, and psychological transitions associated with aging in religious life
- Providing support for elderly and sick members, including addressing issues related to remuneration and care



Watawa wa Taa Consecrated Women of Light

Watawa wa Taa can be loosely translated as “Consecrated Women of Light” in Kiswahili. The name was chosen as an ode to the remarkable presence and works of women religious in Africa.

Whether as members of international, missionary or local Congregations, holding pontifical or diocesan status, African Catholic Sisters can be found at the forefront of society, working for sustained and systemic change in the areas of health care, education, social work, pastoral care, agriculture, and many more.

Watawa wa Taa acts as an incubator of ideas, thoughts, and inspirations of African Catholic Sisters from around the continent as they reflect on this shared and unique way of life and together seeking the Holy Spirit’s invitation as to how to move forward together.



Connect With Us

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