

Complete list of Apostolic Visitation questions to U.S. nuns

Thomas C. Fox | Sep. 9, 2009 NCR Today

In an earlier blog on this site today I posted some questions sent in from a reader, taken from the [working paper](#) [1], or "*Instumentum Laboris*" of the Apostolic Visitation. Those questions and others are to be answered by U.S. women religious as part of phase two of the Visitation process. As an aid to readers I thought it would be helpful to see the entire list of questions, all taken from the working paper. The questions follow a brief introduction:

During the Apostolic Visitation, women religious are encouraged to reflect personally and communally on the following topics in the light of *Vita Consecrata*, *Starting Afresh from Christ*, and other documents as well as their own Constitutions and Chapter decisions. No written response is required to these questions. During Phase 2, a more detailed questionnaire addressing these same topics will be sent to all Major Superiors and will require written responses. The Phase 3 on-site Visits will address these and additional topics as judged necessary.

1. Identity of your religious institute (Vita Consecrata, 1-5; 14-40; 87-91; Starting Afresh from Christ, 5-13; The Service of Authority and Obedience, 4-11; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 573-606)

- A. What is the understanding of religious life in your institute in light of its charism within the Church?
- B. What understanding of religious life is taught to prospective and current members of your institute?
- C. How are ecclesial documents integrated into your theological understanding of religious life?
- D. What are your concerns about the future of your religious institute in living its charism in the Church?
- E. How do sisters in your institute understand and express the vow and virtue of poverty? To whom are they accountable for the observance of the vow?
- F. How do they understand and observe the vow and virtue of chastity? How is their consecration positively expressed?
- G. How do they understand and express the vow and virtue of obedience? To whom are the sisters accountable for the observance of the vow?
- H. Do the sisters take other/additional vows? If so, how do they live this/these out?
- I. Has your institute been involved in, is it now involved in or are you now planning a reconfiguration, federation, merger or union with another congregation or other congregations? If so, how has this integration affected the quality of the life of the institute and of the sisters themselves?
- J. Is your institute moving toward a new form of religious life? If so, how is this new form specifically related to the Church's understanding of religious life?

2. The governance of your religious institute (Vita Consecrata, 46, 49, 56; Starting Afresh from Christ, 14; The Service of Authority and Obedience, 12-15, 27-30; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 587; 617-633; 589-595)

- A. Is the form of Government in your institute in accord with requirements of the Church regarding superiors, chapters, elections, religious houses etc.?

- B. How is the form of government as stated in your Constitutions effectively operative in your institute?
- C. To what extent is this form of governance evident in the daily, ongoing life of sisters in your institute?
- D. In what way are non-members, including ?associates,? involved in the governance of the institute?
- E. What is the process of consultation employed for gathering input and opinions from sisters prior to decision making on significant matters?
- F. Do superiors treat all sisters with fairness and genuine concern and deal compassionately with those who experience difficulties or hold divergent opinions?
- G. What is the process for responding to sisters who dissent publicly or privately from the authoritative teaching of the Church?
- H. What is the process for responding to sisters who disagree publicly or privately with congregational decisions, especially regarding matters of Church authority?

3. *Vocation promotion, admission and formation policies (Vita Consecrata, 64-71; Starting Afresh from Christ, 15-19; The Service of Authority and Obedience, 13, 25; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 641-661)*

- A. Are specific policies, procedures and criteria for admission to the institute clearly specified and followed by those responsible for guiding candidates and admitting new members?
- B. Does your formation program offer your members the foundations of Catholic faith and doctrine through the study of Vatican II documents, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and post-Conciliar documents?
- C. How do your initial and on-going formation programs integrate the most recent documents of the Church concerning religious life?
- D. Do you find your ongoing formation programs adequate and helpful for living your charism effectively in the Church today?
- E. Are there reasons to be concerned about vocations or formation in your institute?

4. *Spiritual life and common life (Vita Consecrata, 41-45, 47, 93-95, 103; Starting Afresh from Christ, 20-32; The Service of Authority and Obedience, 16-22; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 602; 607-616; 662-665)*

- A. How do you express the reality that the Eucharist is the source of the spiritual, communal and ministerial life of the individual sisters and your institute as a whole?
- B. How does your institute express its commitment to strengthening common life through the common celebration of the Eucharist, common prayer, and the sharing of gifts and resources in common?
- C. Are daily Mass and frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance a priority for your sisters?
- D. Do the sisters of your institute participate in the Eucharistic Liturgy according to approved liturgical norms?
- E. Do the sisters pray the Liturgy of the Hours according to your Constitutions using books approved by the Church?
- F. Do sisters of your institute study and put into practice the approved religious and spiritual exercises which are indicative of your specific charism in the Church?
- G. How does the manner of dress of your sisters, as specified in the proper law of your religious institute, bear witness to the dignity and simplicity of your vocation?
- H. What are the current provisions for care of aging and ill sisters and what is your institute?s future plan for their care?

5. *Mission and ministry (Vita Consecrata, 55, 63, 72-83, 96-109; Starting Afresh from Christ, 33-45; The Service of Authority and Obedience, 23-26; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 669; 671; 673-683)*

- A. What is the specific apostolic purpose of your institute as stated in your Constitutions?
- B. Do you see the present apostolic endeavors of your religious institute as viable and effective expressions of your charism and mission?
- C. Which current apostolic projects best represent the focus and purpose of your charism?
- D. What means are being taken to ensure that the charism of the congregation will continue in the case of diminishing presence of your sisters in congregation owned or sponsored institutions?
- E. What are your institute's expectations for ministry in the future?

6. *Financial administration (Vita Consecrata, 63; Starting Afresh from Christ, 19; The Code of Canon Law, cann. 586; 634-640; 668; 670)*

- A. What is your institute's approach to stewardship of resources and financial administration?
- B. How are individual sisters, including those in positions of authority, accountable for good stewardship of resources?
- C. What are your financial concerns for your institute?
- D. Has the institute transferred ownership or control of any property in the past ten years? Does it anticipate any further transfer of ownership or control of ecclesiastical goods? If so, has it been done according to Church norms? Have the members in the institute been a part of the process?

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[1] <http://apostolicvisitation.org/en/news/resources/InstrumentumLaboris.pdf>