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cultural exchanges, the continuing Catholic character of the institution in question as well as its right and duty to form its own candidates and to teach Catholic doctrine according to the norms of the Church, should always be ensured.

#### b) Ecumenical Experience

82. In the formative period, in order that the approach to ecumenism is not cut off from life but rooted in the living experience of communities, encounters and discussions can usefully be organized with other Christians, at the universal and the local level, while observing the relative norms of the Catholic Church.

Representatives of other communities with a professional and religious preparation and the ecumenical spirit necessary for a sincere and constructive dialogue may be invited. Meetings with students of other Churches and ecclesial Communities can also be arranged.<sup>98</sup> Institutions for formation differ so much, however, that it is not possible to give uniform rules for this. As a matter of fact, reality allows for different nuances according to the diversity of nations and regions, as well as for difference of relations between the Catholic Church and the other Churches and ecclesial Communities on the level of ecclesiology, of collaboration and dialogue. Here also the necessity for gradualness and adaptation is very important and is unavoidable. Superiors must apply general principles and adapt these according to their particular situations and occasions.

### 2. Ministers and Collaborators not Ordained

#### a) Doctrinal Formation

83. Besides ordained ministers, there are other recognized collaborators in pastoral work—catechists, teachers and other lay helpers. Local Churches have institutes of religious science, pastoral institutes or other centers of formation or *aggiornamento* for their formation. The same study programs and norms as for the theological institutes apply here, but need to be adapted to the level of these participants and their studies.

84. More particularly, given the legitimate variety of charisms and of the work of monasteries, institutes of consecrated life, and societies of apostolic life, it is very important that "all communities should participate in the life of the Church. According to its individual character, each should make its own and foster in every possible way the enterprises and objectives of the Church," including the "ecumenical field."<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Cf. 192-194 below.

<sup>99</sup> Conciliar Decr. *Perfectae caritatis* (PC) 2.

Formation here should start in the novitiate and continue through the further stages. The *Ratio formationis* of the various institutes should, in analogy with the curricula of the ordained ministers, stress both an ecumenical dimension in every subject and provide for a specific course of ecumenism appropriately adapted to the circumstances and local situations. At the same time, it is important that the competent authority of the institute see to the formation of specialists in ecumenism to serve as guides for the ecumenical commitment of the whole institute.

#### b) Ecumenical Experience

85. To translate study into experience, it is useful to encourage contacts and exchanges between Catholic monasteries and religious communities and those of other Churches and religious communities. These can take the form of exchanges of information, spiritual or occasionally even material help, or can be in the form of cultural exchanges.

86. Given the importance of the role of the laity in the Church and in society, laity with ecumenical responsibilities should be encouraged to develop contacts and exchanges with other Churches and ecclesial Communities, in accordance with the norms of this Directory.<sup>100</sup>

#### C. Specialized Formation

87. *The importance of formation for dialogue.* Taking account of the influence of higher cultural institutes, it is clear that ecclesiastical faculties and other institutes of higher education play an especially important part in the preparation for and conduct of ecumenical dialogue and for progress towards that Christian unity which dialogue itself helps Christians to attain. Pedagogical preparation for dialogue must meet the following requirements:

- a) a sincere personal commitment, lived out in faith, without which dialogue is no longer a dialogue between brothers and sisters but rather a mere academic exercise;
- b) the search for new ways and means for building up mutual relationships and re-establishing unity based on greater fidelity to the Gospel and on the authentic profession of the Christian faith, in truth and charity;
- c) the conviction that ecumenical dialogue is not a purely private matter between persons or particular groups but that it takes place within the framework of the commitment of the whole Church and must in consequence be carried out in a way that is coherent with the teaching and the directives of its Pastors;

<sup>100</sup> Cf. 50-51 above.