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Priestly Formation: Historical Perspectives

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Introduction

As the title indicates, the aim of this essay is to study "priestly formation" from a historical perspective in the context of the seminary system as it exists in the Church today. The theme of this issue of the journal, however, is broader, namely, vocation and formation in general, which includes the whole spectrum of "religious life" as well. Here, too, the question of formation is crucial. However, it will not be possible for me to deal with religious life within this short space, although much of what will be said is applicable to religious life as well.

The essay is divided into three parts. One of the most important influences in the history of priestly formation in the Church was the seminary legislation of the Council of Trent. The first part deals with an examination of the situation before the Council of Trent; it then discusses the Tridentine legislation and its implementation in the Church. The second part deals with the history of priestly formation in India, both in the Thomas Christian community and in the Latin Church. The third part discusses the contribution of Vatican II toward a new vision of priestly training and ministry in the Church. The essay ends with an analytical conclusion.

1. *The Institution of Seminaries in the West*

In today's usage the term seminary designates a special type of school dedicated to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation of the clergy. It is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, which was commonly used to describe a place where young seedlings were prepared for eventual transplantation. Its first official usage dates back to the Council of Trent which did not invent the term but accepted it from the writings of the period, of such men as Cardinal Reginald Pole, St. John Fisher, and St. Ignatius of Loyola.[1]

The Council of Trent was called in order to respond to a serious challenge to the Church, namely, the Protestant Reformation. Within the perspective of defence and restoration, it seemed necessary that the Church's theology be made as traditional and clear, and its discipline as pragmatic and effective as possible. As far as its ministries were concerned, regarding which Protestant criticism was the most severe, the Church sought to ensure that its ministers were genuinely interested in the service of the Church, and that the "hirelings" within could no longer threaten the Church.[2] With the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of the universi-

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ties, the ancient system of clerical formation where young men were prepared for the priesthood in the cathedral schools became either impoverished or were generally abandoned. As a result, a large segment of the late medieval and pre-Reformation clergy received inadequate training and were very often ordained for an office they were not sufficiently equipped to exercise. They were morally deficient, intellectually unqualified and professionally incompetent. There was a real need to revamp this structure. This was the problem which the Council of Trent tried to solve. Toward this end, the Council put forward the true Catholic doctrine of the Sacrament of Orders in its 23rd session of 15th July 1563. In the 18th canon of the Decree of Reform, the Council made mandatory the institution of seminaries where future ministers were rightly brought up, educated in religion and trained in ecclesiastical studies and religious practices.[3] But before going into the details of how Trent came upon this idea, let us briefly look at the pre-Tridentine formation of clerics.[4]

1.1 Pre-Tridentine Practices

Numerous books have been written on the history and theology of the priesthood but often we see in them little about the formation of ministers. Perhaps, for the Church, it was a matter of course that once the duties of the clergy were made clear, a suitable preparation would automatically follow. But this was not always the case. The Gospels tell us how Jesus prepared his close disciples for ministry. The ministry for which he chose them was the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. He told his disciples that they were not self-appointed ministers but were chosen by God for a specific mission just as he himself was. Jesus' ministry was a ministry of love and service, but it was essentially a ministry of preaching the Word of God. Jesus demanded that his disciples be with him and accompany him; he constantly instructed them on the various aspects of ministry.[5] The New Testament Churches gave birth to a number of ministries[6] as the occasion arose. Often we come across the mention of their essential qualities[7] but little is said about their training. The post-New Testament writings and the Fathers, too, follow similar lines. The quality of the ministerial person stands always in the forefront.[8] Origen is already conscious of the failure of the Church's ministers to measure up to the highest spiritual ideal which belongs to their office:

> Most of the bishops . . . are completely lacking in understanding of their proper vocation . . . they are worldly-minded, pursue earthly occupations and affairs, long for wealth and land, are haughty, quarrelsome, and self-assertive, allow themselves to be flattered and corrupted . . . Clergy brag about their seniority, and try to ensure that their children or relatives will succeed them . . . the only thing they take seriously are their advantages and privileges, just like the Pharisees of old.[9]

But he gives little information about the training of the clergy. The Church does not seem to have laid down fixed rules for it during this period. Most probably the cleric obtained his theological knowledge first of all in the lessons of the catechumenate, and further,

by private study. This would sometimes be with a learned Christian teacher, who after the fashion of the philosophers of antiquity now also gave lessons in the "philosophy" of Christianity. Knowledge of liturgical functions was provided by direct participation in the prayer and worship of the Church.[10] The famous Catechetical Schools of Theology, like the School of Alexandria, were not training centres for priests as such, but, as important centres of theology, might have been the *alma mater* of a considerable number of priests.

Slowly the training of the clergy became more personal and practical. They were attached to the service of a particular church, and there, by assisting the bishop and presbyters, gradually learned to look after the church and to do its ministrations. In some places there already existed the practice of gathering prospective candidates around the bishop, all living together in the episcopal dwelling, like the *vita communis* of the clergy of the Church of Vercelli under bishop Eusebius.[11] The exercise of the Minor Orders[12] was an important preparation for the priesthood, too, because the suitability of a candidate for the priesthood could be measured through it. The existence of such a system is attested by a letter of Pope St. Siricius (d. 399) to Himerius, bishop of Tarragona.[13] But we should also note that the sociological and cultural elements which characterized the cleric were minimum. In the early Church they lived like ordinary people, tending their farms or other businesses. Only as time went on was this changed. They began to wear special clothing, the tonsure was prescribed somewhat generally for the clergy, and celibacy began to be required in a general way. Orders were made irrevocable, thus making a return to lay state difficult, and various exemptions were granted to the clergy, leading to the establishment of a class of the clergy, and, thus, to clericalism.

Augustine played an important role in the field of clerical training. He established perhaps the first "seminary" in his own episcopal palace. His biographer Possidius speaks of the establishment of a sort of convent where he lived, together with his clergy, a life of prayer, discipline and study. He had imposed the obligation of passing a certain period of discipline and study as a condition necessary for ordination.[14] This practice, however, might not have been not widespread, and not all bishops were as solicitous for the welfare of their clerics as Augustine. So we see papal interventions by Gelasius, Leo I, Gregory I[15] etc., admonishing bishops to take the training of the clerics seriously. But the example of Augustine seems to have been imitated by some local churches. The practice of assigning a determined person to undertake the responsibility for the formation of clerics under the direction of the bishop also began around this time. The Second Council of Toledo (527 or 531) speaks of entrusting the formation of clerics to a *praepositus,* and the Fourth (633), of the necessity of having the candidates for Holy Orders live together so that they might be trained together.[16] Also some monasteries were engaged in the formation of clerics, like the monastery of Lérins from which proceeded a number of bishops who copied this model in their own dioceses.[17] Thus, the two

important types of institutions for clerical formation in subsequent centuries, the monastic school and the episcopal school emerged. Charlemagne under an imperial ordinance commanded the establishment of schools in connection with the cathedrals and monasteries as a means of assuring a well-trained clergy.[18] So from that time a greater portion of the clergy received their education and formation in these institutions. However, these schools began to fall into decadence partly due to the breakdown of the feudal system and partly due to the rise of the universities. Universities became the centres of learning but few clerics were able to pursue their studies there. Moreover, they did not offer the candidtes any spiritual formation nor prepare them for ministry. The Third (1179) and Fourth (1215) Lateran Councils legislated regarding this. But it was common knowledge that clerical formation lacked a solid and well balanced intellectual and moral foundation in the pre-Reformation period.

> It was left to the individual, after attending the Latin school in his town, to acquire the necessary knowledge from a pastor or in a monastery. One could obtain ordination from a bishop, usually without any special examination. The cathedral *scholasticus*, and in the fifteenth century also a special cathedral preacher, had the charge of instructing clerics and of examining candidates for ordination .... Shockingly slight was the indispensable minimum of knowledge which thirteenth-century theologians required of the priests and with which persons were probably satisfied in practice.[19]

It was natural that the Reformers with their emphasis on preaching found this situation quite unacceptable. This is the context of the Tridentine seminary legislation.

1.2 The Tridentine Reform

From the above it is clear that the Council's legislation was not entirely new creation. It was rather a restoration and renovation of the traditional manner in which young clerics received their formation. Fundamentally it represented a return to the concept of the cathedral school. In the report of the preparatory commission in the matter of clerical training it was pointed out that one of the worst evils in the Church was the ordination of the intellectually and morally unprepared; the report suggested measures to remedy it, namely, better supervision before conferring Holy Orders by a master or professor appointed by the bishop.[20] There was nothing new in this directive but the problem was identified, and therefore, was considered to be worthy of discussion. In the 5th session of the Council, on 5th April 1546, the matter came up again in connection with the teaching and preaching of Scripture. Here, too, fundamentally nothing new was said but rather the prescriptions of the Fourth Lateran Council were restated. The next discussion on the matter took place at the new venue of the Council, Bologna, the following year. Unfortunately, the recommendations, which again did not really suggest anything new, were never submitted to the Council because of the inability of the Council to continue there and its suspension in 1549. A considerable number of years would pass before

the Council came up with the system of the seminaries. Two events that occurred in the meantime influenced this decision of the Council, namely, the founding in 1552 of the German college in Rome for the formation of the German clergy by the Society of Jesus, and the seminary legislation of Reginald Pole in England in 1556.[21] In fact, it is said that the immediate source of the Tridentine seminary legislation was canon 11 of the synodal legislation of Reginald Pole.

In its 23rd session, the Council, which resumed at Trent once again, discussed the matter of clerical education in detail, and on July 15th, 1563, in canon 18 of the Reformatory Decrees, the seminary legislation as we know it today, the longest of the disciplinary decrees, came into existence. The provisions are quite extensive and are fundamentally a return to the ancient practice of grouping candidates for the priesthood around their bishop and having them thus formed morally and intellectually under his supervision. But now it entailed the complete isolation of the candidates from their environment for the entire training period so that they did not succumb to the world's pleasures, and were brought up from adolescent years onwards in an orderly way. The lower age limit was 12 years. They were now segregated with a special dress and tonsure, and a special curriculum of studies was ordered to be taught there. Soon after the Council the decree was implemented and it had outstanding supporters, like St. Charles Borromeo. In the decades and centuries which followed, the system undoubtedly helped to revitalize the moral and spiritual life of the clergy. For four hundred years it determined the quality of priesthood in the Church supported by the theology of priesthood that Trent had advocated.

At the same time, an absolutization of the Tridentine decree also took place, which was seen as the culmination and final solution rather than a beginning. Trent's theological presuppositions were very narrow. There was a total absence of reference to Jesus and his ministry in the decree. It was exclusively focussed on the Eucharist. The preaching of the Word was mentioned only in a secondary way. Leadership in the Christian community was not given any major place in the Tridentine discussion.[22] The strictly orthodox, celibate priests trained in the newly established seminaries became the bulwarks of Roman Catholicism and its centralized system in the following centuries. But the Enlightenment and secularization which engulfed Europe had its adverse impact on the seminaries, too. The French Revolution and other revolutions in Europe and the subsequent spirit of restoration in the Church affected priestly formation. Some clergymen demanded a more liberal approach to formation which was vehemently resisted by the Church, for example, by Pope Gregory XVI.

1.3 The Modernist Challenge: An Opportunity Lost

The next opportunity for a fresh look at the seminary system came in the wake of the Modernist crisis during the pontificate of Pius X. Pius X was truly concerned about the renewal of pastoral care, and, therefore, wanted a reform

of seminaries; but what resulted was a sort of police system of surveillance and espionage, based on an overestimation of obedience at the cost of a free exchange of opinions in seminaries. Totally unconcerned about the new world that was taking shape around him, the Pope produced a seminary system which increased its inherent weakness of being an educational system leading to a ghetto life without contact with the outside world. Individual priests who were interested in bridging the gap between the Church and theology and the modern world and its temper and had demanded reforms were considered radicals and were condemned. The scholastic orientation of theological studies and strict rules of education of priests in seminaries were decreed with the result that the antiquated system of the strictly secluded seminary training continued in the Church for decades. The "worker-priests movement" in France was another opportunity to rethink the seminary system and to break free from the evils of that system but it did not take place. This was the context of the Second Vatican Council.

2. Priestly Formation in India

2.1 The Thomas Christians: Pre-Portuguese Period

The survey of priestly formation in India should be divided into two parts: among the Thomas Christians and in the Latin Church. The practice of priestly training among the Thomas Christians can be divided into two periods again, namely, the pre-Portuguese period and the post-Portuguese period. In the pre-Portuguese period, the Church of the Thomas Christians had a unique structure. When the Portuguese arrived in India they found here a Church which was fully indigenised as far as the socio-cultural spheres were concerned, but under a foreign hierarchy. The Patriarch of Babylon or Persia was its spiritual head who ordained bishops for India. They celebrated their liturgy in the Syriac language, using the East-Syrian rite. But this foreign character was minimised to a considerable extent through the institution of the Archdeacon. He was a native of India and for all practical purposes the head of the Church in India. The clergy came next who were totally indigenous and local, although Mathias Mundadan says that there are some documents which would suggest that there were also East-Syrian priests working in India.[23] The clergy were plentiful, attached to each church. They were called *cathenars* or *casanars* which was the Malabarization of the Syriac word *qasisa* (elder or presbyter). Outside the church, the priests were not very different from the laymen in their dress. They did not wear the tonsure, instead they had a tuft of hair on their head. Placid Podipara, however, gives the description of a priestly dress.[24] I don't think there is any need to speculate much on the priestly dress and it may be wise to agree with Mundadan who says that what form exactly the priestly garb took cannot be determined from any document.[25] There is no doubt that priests were generally married. Besides, secular clergy there seem to have been monks and nuns also.

The ordination to priesthood took place in two stages. The first stage was when they were made *samasas*, when

the Orders up to the diaconate were conferred, and the second stage was when they were made *cathenars* or priests. In selecting candidates age does not seem to have played any major role. Boys of sixteen or seventeen and at times even little children were ordained. The reason for this seems to have been the absence of bishops for long intervals. The training was done under the care of a *Malpan* (teacher), an elderly and learned priest. Under his instruction, the candidates learned to read Syriac and to perform the various functions attached to their office, like saying the mass on certain days, reciting the divine office, performing marriages, funerals, and such family functions as *chathams* (annual feasts of diseased relatives), the first rice-feeding of a child, etc. The young clerics studied for a parish and not for a diocese and the community was responsible for their training. There was no fixed duration for training. After having been recommended by the *Malpan*, the *palliyogam* (parish assembly) and the archdeacon, they were ordained by the bishops. This recommendation was known as the *deshakuri* which also gave the assurance that after ordination he would serve that parish and the parish would be responsible for his upkeep. If centres of special learning existed, as seems to have been the case, only a few could study in them. The vast majority of clerical candidates studied in the *Malpanates.* These resembled the traditional *gurukulavasam* (living with the teacher) in India, where the disciples lived with the *guru* or teacher and studied under his care. It is difficult to make judgements about the quality of the training given in the *Malpanates.* It was definitely not very high. The course of instruction might have been that of the East-Syrian Church where the schools of Nisibis and Edessa had set the example: Scripture, chants and songs of the divine office, the performance of the sacraments, the canons of the synods and the Fathers, grammar etc. Although they did not fare well as great theologians, the priests were held in high esteem and enjoyed a prominent position in society. They were part of the life of the people. So till the arrival of the Portuguese there was no seminary in India. In itself the system of the *Malpanate* was not extraordinary. In ancient times, "the teacher was the school" in many cultures. As we have seen, it was practised in the early period of the Church, too. Only that in India the system continued even when in other parts of the world other systems were developed, like the catechetical schools, the cathedral schools or the monastic schools because it was rooted in the culture of the country.[26]

2.1.1 The Impact of the Portuguese

In less than fifty years after the arrival of the Portuguese, the first seminary was founded for the Thomas Christians by the Franciscan Vincent Lagos in Cranganore (1541). He wanted to give the students the same kind of education as was given in the West, and, thus, by Latinising the clergy, he hoped to Latinise the Church. This was a grave mistake. The fully Latin instruction was unacceptable to the people and they rejected the priests trained there. In 1581 the Jesuits began a seminary in Vaipicota for the Syrian Christians.

They did not repeat the mistakes of the Franciscans and used Syriac in instruction, and, therefore, it was better accepted. The seminary had to be shifted to Ambhazhakad due to a Dutch attack and continued there till the Society was suppressed. Meanwhile, the Tridentine decree on seminaries was being implemented throughout the world and the Provincial Councils of Goa tried to abolish the *Malpanate* system and to introduce the Tridentine decree fully in India, too. This did not succeed fully. The *Malpanates* continued to exist.[27]

But other seminaries were founded. The Dominican missionary Francis Donatti founded a seminary at Kaduthuruthy in 1624 and it was accepted by the community since it tried to preserve the traditions of the community but it disappeared with the death of its founder. In 1682 the Carmelite missionaries started a seminary in Verapoly. It was restarted in 1764 and both Syrians and Latins were trained there. Due to practical problems another seminary was started for the Syrians in Alangatt in 1767. In 1833 the Syrian Carmelites started a seminary in Mannanam (later on Dharmaram College) which included some secular clergy. It was during this period that the vicar apostolic Bernardine Bacinelli legally abolished the *Malpanates* and made seminary education compulsory. In the process of reorganization, other seminaries were founded: Verapoly, reserved for the Latins, and four other seminaries for the Syrians, at Mannanam, Puthenpally, Vazhakulam, and Elthuruthu. In 1888 all the seminaries were brought together once again in Puthenpally. Meanwhile, in 1866 there began a seminary at Mangalapuzha under the *Padroado* rule. In 1932 the Puthenpally seminary was transferred to Mangalapuzha and was open to all rites. The attempts continued to start a seminary only for the Thomas Christians and these fructified in 1962 with the founding of a seminary in Vadavathoor near Kottayam. In 1997 the Mangalapuzha seminary was divided once again between the Latins and the Syrians. Now the Syro-Malankara Church, too, possesses a full-fledged seminary at Trivandrum for training its priests.

This is the history of the training of clergy in the Thomas Christian community from the beginning, leading to the abolition of the ancient system of the *Malpantes* and the imposition of the seminaries which was a purely Western institution.[28] The abolition of the *Malpanates* has contributed a great deal toward the Westernization of the Indian Church. With the introduction of a Western system the traditions and history of the community were submerged for centuries. The *gurukulavasam* system saw to it that there was constant touch between the trainee and the teacher and the trainee and the community. It was a system based on genuine Indian tradition and the legitimate traditions of the Church. From an ecclesiological perspective, the seminary was an attack on the autonomy of the local Church and an instrument of Roman centralization. The seminaries introduced seclusion and in this secluded atmosphere it gave a "more systematic training" but who were the priests who were trained in these seminaries? They were agents of Westernization.

2.2 The Latin Church

The intervention of the Western Church outside the Thomas Christian community as far as priestly training is concerned is briefly treated below.[29] In the first forty years, the Portuguese did not try to found a seminary in India for the training of priests but sent the candidates to Portugal. The beginning of a seminary was in 1541 when Diogo da Borba and Miguel Vaz, the vicar general of Goa, founded the Confraternity of the Holy Faith which soon became a college for the training of priests for the East. It was entrusted to the Society of Jesus. It was called St. Paul's College and existed till the Jesuits were suppressed in India in 1759. The Jesuits also had a second seminary in Goa, the Rachol seminary, which after the suppression of the Order became the central seminary of Goa, under the jurisdiction of the bishop, after the model Trent had originally envisaged for seminaries. These were training centres for local priests who were supposed to be helpers of the Europeans. Other religious orders also had such colleges which served many purposes, including the training of priests. So already years before the Tridentine seminary decree such institutions existed in India except that they had a different set-up here. Even after the Council of Trent this particular set-up continued. They were not under the diocesan bishop but under the *Padroado* or *Propaganda*, and were administered by religious orders. The Provincial Councils of Goa tried to exert some sort of control over these institutions and to bring them in tune with the decrees of Trent. But the seminaries continued to be in the hands of European religious orders which were not seriously concerned about the role of the diocesan priest and their training.One can say that the entire seminary system of this period was controlled and manipulated by religious orders to their own advantage. For centuries they even refused to accept Indians into their fold on purely racist grounds.

The founding of the *Propaganda* in 1622 was a measure against this spirit of the religious orders. The *Propaganda* had a vision of a local Church and already in 1630 it had admonished the bishops of India to create an Indian clergy who are not subordinates but equals. But these pleas went unheard because of the opposition of the *Padroado*. Moreover, the methods of the *Propaganda* were no better than those of others as can be seen from the seminaries it founded. The first *Propaganda* seminary in the vicariate of Bijapur under the patronage of Matheo de Castro, its first bishop, ended in a fiasco. Another seminary of the *Propaganda* was the seminary at Verapoly founded in 1764. Its history in the first 100 years had nothing extraordinary to show. Another *Propaganda* seminary was the one at Pondicherry under the French Foreign Mission from 1778 (later St. Peter's Seminary). It too did not achiee anything very significant. The same fate befell the seminary in Bombay founded in 1819. The conflict between the *Padroado* and the *Propaganda* reached its climax in the Goan schism from 1838-1857. As we know, it was a very damaging conflict for the whole Church in India.

After that there were some attempts from both *Padroado* and *Propa-*

ganda authorities to reform the seminary system. The conditions for this were created by the erection of the Indian hierarchy in 1886 and the practical abolition of the *Padroado* in India. The seminary of Rachol was given, for the first time in south Asia, the privilege of giving the bachelor's degree in theology because its programme, it was claimed, could be compared to that of any seminary in the West. This was not really a compliment because its programme had nothing to do with the Indian context. It was totally foreign but fitted well into the uniform Roman system of priestly training. As far as the *Propaganda* was concerned, one of its important contributions was the instruction of 1845 after the Synod of Pondicherry (1844) which once and for all settled the question whether the Indian clergy possessed the moral and intellectual abilities to become priests who are equal to the Europeans. It stated that Indians should be suitably prepared so that they were able to take up the rein of their Church in their own hands. But the Apostolic Visitation of 1859-62 showed the rather depressing state of affairs in the Indian Church as far as seminary education was concerned. It seemed as if 200 years of admonitions by the *Propaganda* to bring up a local clergy had no effect whatsoever. This was the occasion for a second instruction by the *Propaganda* in 1869. Its concrete result was the founding of the Papal Seminary in Kandy in 1893. It was supposed to be a central seminary for India and a model seminary for priestly training. The centralized Roman system succeeded at last. It abolished a system that was indigenous and unique and substituted it with a foreign structure. The 20th century has seen tremendous growth, both qualitative and quantitative, in seminary education in India and the mushrooming of seminaries continues unabated even today.

3. The Impact of Vatican II and the Post-Conciliar Period.

Like every other area in the Church, priestly training was also radically affected by the Second Vatican Council. Unfortunately, the most striking thing about the priesthood in the years after the Council was the unprecedentedly large number of those leaving it and the way that the official Church reacted to this situation. The Council addressed the problem of priestly formation and ministry in two of its documents, *Optatam Totius* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis,* on the training of priests and on the ministry and life of priests. But the discussion on the priesthood after the Council took place in a wider context. Many issues that had been overlooked or suppressed in the Council broke out in the post-Conciliar Church. The awareness of the different aspects of the priesthood (the wider shape of its ministry, its decreasing numbers, its obligatory celibacy, its stress, the underlying rationale of its differentiation from the laity etc.) and the open way they were discussed made it a thorny problem for the Church. Moreover, seen in the light of other Council documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* (Celibacy looked less attractive within the context of the more explicit affirmation of human values, including the value of married love) *Lumen Gentium* (the acceptance of married diaconate),

Sacrosanctum Concilium, etc., the formation and ministry of priests seemed to be in urgent need of revision. There resulted a serious crisis in the priestly and religious life immediately after the Council. Of course this happened in varying degrees in different regions of the world, the most affected being Western Europe and America.

The theological discussion on priesthood challenged many of the traditional concepts hitherto held to be unassailable. The New Testament evidence for hierarchical priesthood itself was questioned. The higher valuation of the general priesthood of the faithful as well as their being entrusted with pastoral services till then reserved for priests made one ask what the specific difference between ordained priests and the laity was. Influenced by Western democratic ethos, it was asked, whether authority in the Church was to be based on competence, and thus understood not sacramentally but functionally, and therefore, judged in service to the congregation. The question of celibacy which was an unfinished agenda of the Council was perhaps the most discussed topic of all. All these led to a massive exodus of clergy in the years immediately following the Council.[30]

The encyclical *sacerdotalis caelibatus* of 24th June 1967 did not solve the problem in any way. In general there was a feeling that priests and priestly training had lost touch with the day-to-day world. There was a demand for closer solidarity with the working class, the poor and other marginalized social groups. There was a demand for more democratization in the Church, a more authentic liturgy, and renewed methods in pastoral care. The radical movements died down slowly for various reasons,[31] but the numerous surveys conducted among clergy throughout the world on the priestly ministry showed that there were genuine concerns and challenging problems which had to be addressed.[32] One of them was the system of priestly training in seminaries. Seminarians pleaded for the abolition of the strictly isolated manner of life in the seminaries. They demanded that they be permitted to live individually or in groups in the midst of other students in their places of study. The curriculum of studies was considered inadequate for the pastoral task that awaited them. The decree of the Council *Optatam Totius* had made some recommendations in this regard by allowing considerable flexibility in the planning of seminary curriculum according to the needs of the local Churches. The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* of 6th January 1970[33] encouraged bishops to pursue this matter further. The 1990 Synod of bishops treated the topic "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day." The preparatory document of the Synod pointed out poignantly that humanity was going through a cultural and spiritual crisis, and absolute norms and references to the past as the source of wisdom had to be rejected. But sensitive issues like married clergy, ordination of married men to the priesthood, non-stipendiary priesthood, women priests, the possibility of a time-bound priestly ministry etc. were avoided in the Synod, and there was a straight refusal to acknowledge the existence of the most basic theologi-

cal and pastoral issues. As long as that continues, no real reform of the structures, priestly formation can take place. The "cult of truth" to which the Pope in his final exhortation urged,[34] will remain a mere lip-service in the present system of training of priests. It must also be said that neither the Council nor any post-Conciliar initiative has questioned the basic institution of the seminary system.

Conclusion

In the concluding part of this essay let us look critically at priestly formation, especially in the light of the post-Vatican II developments which we have discussed above. Since its emergence more than four hundred years ago, the institution of the seminary has remained an integral part of the Catholic ecclesiastical structure, protected by the wall of canon law, numerous conciliar and synodal decrees and papal exhortations. No one has seriously challenged its basic structure ever since. Only there have been calls for reform. One reason for this general acceptance has been that the seminaries generally improved the intellectual and spiritual formation of the clergy. The Second Vatican Council has asserted that seminaries are necessary for priestly formation (*OT* 4), and it is reasonable to conclude that this basic structure will remain unchanged for some time to come. But it produces a rather unified priestly group and has become the main instrument of uniformity and centralization in the Church, although the Council had, in principle, given freedom to the episcopal conferences to draw up their own programme of formation "so that priestly training will always answer the pastoral requirements of the particular area in which the ministry is to be exercised" (*OT* 1). This is the only way to rectify some of the inherent drawbacks of the seminary system today, but it has hardly taken place in practice, and the long arm of Rome is still visible through its various pronouncements, and recently in the most tangible way, through the Apostolic Visitation of seminaries. As a result, seminary formation continues to be antiquated and out of touch with reality.

Let me illustrate this point. There had been numerous pronouncements and initiatives by the Indian hierarchy regarding priestly formation in India,[35] leading to the formulation of the Charter of Priestly Formation for India in 1988. The All India Seminar of 1969 had set the tone for all the subsequent initiatives after the Council when it said that the seminarians "should not be isolated from the mainstream of life."[36] In the Research Seminar "The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society" it was said that seminary formation in India was not situation-oriented, and therefore, a field-oriented training should be given and for this purpose the methodology of teaching and the curriculum should undergo a radical change.[37] The Charter of Priestly Formation for India says that "at every stage of their formation, the seminarians should be in touch with the societal, cultural, and religious realities in which they are . . . "[38] But what happens, unfortunately, is a very sad thing: Sebastian Kappen put it succintly: "The first part of formation is creating a gulf between seminarians and the world, and the second part, in fact the rest of life, is an attempt to bridge that gulf."[39] He

called the seminaries a dis-value if they did not involve themselves in action in the world.

That the lack of touch with the actual situation is a major problem in seminary formation was adequately brought to light by the various studies undertaken on priestly formation in India. Take for example the national survey which was the basis for drawing up the Charter of Priestly Formation. The survey says that about two-thirds of all the respondents are of the opinion that "the seminary was so sheltered from the mainstream of life that the seminarian lost touch with ordinary people and their problems."[40] Another survey concludes: "For an adequate and fruitful formation, future priests should be exposed to the socio-economic, socio-political and cultural realities of Indian life while living in the seminary. They should come into contact with people in their concrete situations and their spiritual and material needs and aspirations through reflective analysis of these situations."[41] Bridging the enormous gap between expectations and reality in this regard is the first and foremost component of any effective change in the formation system in the seminary today. This may entail a radical change in the very structure of the seminary system itself and the values it tries to propagate. This may mean a creative adaptation of the ancient *gurukulavasam* which, for example, seems to be the rationale behind the regional study centres of the Jesuits in India. This would call for a transition from the foreign idiom to the Indian idiom in seminary formation because, as Michael Amaladoss says, "our cultural consciousness is heavily overlaid with foreign elements since our formation has been in terms of a foreign idiom,"[42] and unless it changes there can be very little effective formation.

The seminary system was imposed on the country after destroying an indigenous structure that existed in India. What went on in the name of formation in these seminaries was simply the transmission of a foreign culture with even manifest racist undertones and suppression of all indigenous elements. And our consciousness is so overlaid with these foreign elements even today that for all practical purposes we are still under its oppressive yoke, with a curriculum that is largely irrelevant. The above mentioned national survey of Paul Parathazham says that the majority of the respondents think that the theology they were taught was "largely irrelevant to the pastoral needs of India today," and less than a third of them feel that seminary formation gave them "a deeper understanding of India and its culture."[43] And Mathew Vallipalam concurrs when he says that there has to be a radical change in the academic system of the seminaries from the prevailing Western model to one that is theologically and pastorally relevant to Indian spirituality, culture and life-style.[44]

Are these enough? I think the educational principle in seminaries itself must undergo a radical change. It must be adult centred (andragogical) rather than child centred (pedagogical).[45] Theological education premises on fostering adult learning. Unfortunately, too few institutions design their methodology based on an adult model of learning. In an adult learning environ-

ment the student and the teacher mutually assess needs and negotiate goals. The learner is encouraged to contribute to the learning processes by virtue of his or her life experiences. The adult learner explores things that are important to him or her to apply them to developmental or life tasks. Evaluations are conducted mutually with a view to their use for setting future goals. These principles provide a good adult learning environment and offer a good model for future adult interactions for ministers.[46] This is fostered best in the pastoral field and that is why field education must be an essential and unique part of priestly formation. It is only in the field that the students are in touch with issues of personal and spiritual growth and societal change, and these are precisely the areas of growth needed for ministry.

All these will ultimately depend on the view of priestly formation and priestly identity one has. What is the fundamental identity of the priest and what is the goal of his formation? If it is to form a pliable, obedient, apparently celibate, moralizing and authoritarian clergy who will perform an essentially sacramental function for the Christian community, today's formation programme can continue without much change. While this may delight a great number of bishops and people, it may not satisfy the large number of educated people whose world of growing expectations differ considerably from that of the vast majority of ordinary people. And it is reasonable to expect that education will spread and improve rather than stagnate or decline. Therefore, a paradigm that is worth considering for training future ministers is that of spiritual leadership.[47]

Who are spiritual leaders? They are not people who have learned facts and mastered techniques but who have experienced the reality of being freed by the Gospel, who have personally glimpsed meaning in the midst of a fractured world.[48] And as a leader he is able to lead people individually and communally to a more efficacious relationship with God, each other and the world. He is involved with the world, is a person of compassion and is committed to the truth. He is a person of prayer and embraces the value of poverty. He is a person of hospitality who gives of himself, that others may find rest, comfort and challenge. Finally, the spiritual leader is one who is capable of intimacy.[49] Formation should enable a person for professional ministry as a spiritual leader.

Many people have problems with the word "professional" because they tend to think that it may somehow diminish the importance of the notion of vocation or that it sets the minister apart from the laity as a privileged person or that it cannot measure the inner relationship of a minister to the workings of the Holy Spirit, etc. But what is really meant by professional is that the minister should be provided with specific skills which he will need as a minister, which give him a sense of identity in a profession with other colleagues, and help confirm his calling. These skills include integrated studies in different theological subjects, with preparation for expertise in such performance based disciplines as teaching, preaching, counsel-

ling, and celebrating.[50] As community builders, ministers must possess good managerial skills, such as the ability to "problem- solve" and to work with others to accomplish a task. They must be the envisioners of the community. They must call the community and themselves to a greater sense of Christian identify, that is, a community that makes its decisions grounded in the Christian message. In that, the minister is the theologian of the community who is a reflective practitioner, who learns from the midst of situations which are uncertain and unique. In fact this – being a reflective practitioner – is the basic skill that a spiritual leader requires.[51]

One wonders whether large seminaries where hundreds of people are housed together as in a green house, practically cut off from the real world, is the right place to form spiritual leaders for the 21st. century. Formation is education and education is growth, recognizing the uniqueness of the person and his/her individuality and promoting personal fulfilment and self-actualization. These are essential for the self-identity of the minister. This is *hardly achieved* by the present-day seminary formation. Added to that there are even institutions like the national seminary (Papal Seminary!) which is an anachronism and a relic of the past. It answered a concrete historical need a century ago. It is high time that in a country like India such institutions are abolished. Regional training in small groups under learned teachers with little or no separation from the world outside should be the normal way of priestly training. Specialised institutions where specific aspects of the ministry are taught and where people come for a limited period could be retained as they could serve a need. This will be a meaningful way to combine the traditional Indian way of *gurukulavasam* with the modern spirit. It is gratifying to note that in some regional theology centres such attempts are being made with some measure of success.

Notes

1. "Seminary", *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 13, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 72.
2. Alexander Ganoczy, ""Splendours and Miseries" of the Tridentine Doctrine of Ministries", *Concilium*, 8/10 (1972), 75.
3. Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. II, Sheed and Ward, London, and Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1990, 750-53.
4. Two sources might be James A. O'donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation. Its sources and Its Formation*, University of Louvain, Louvain, 1957 and Anthony Lendakadavil, *Candidates for the Priesthood*, Vendrame Institute, Shillong, 1989. This book surveys the situation till most recent times.
5. See Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988, 3-29.
6. *Ibid.*, 40-44.
7. For example, in appointing the deacons, the community is told to pick out men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:1-6) or the qualities of bishops and deacons in 1 Tim 3:1-14.

8. For example in the Didache: "Accordingly, elect for yourselves bishops [episkopoi] and deacons [diakonoi], men who are an honour to the Lord, of gentle disposition, not attached to money, honest and well-tried . . . " Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, Christian Classics Inc., Westminster, Maryland, 1986, 33-34; or see Polycarp's instruction: "The presbyters must be tenderhearted, merciful toward all, turning back [the sheep] that have gone astray, visiting the sick, not neglecting the widow or orphan or poor man . . . abstaining from anger, respect of persons, unrighteous judgment, being far from all love of money . . . " Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 103.
9. H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesial Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church in the First Three Centuries*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1969, 15, quoted by Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 113.
10. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan, eds., *History of the Church*, vol. 1, Crossroad, New York, 1986, 351-52, hereafter, *History of the Church*.
11. St. Ambrose, *letter* LXIII, cf. *PL*, XVI, 1207.
12. For a historical survey of the Minor Orders see Kenan Osborne, *Priesthood*, 195-99.
13. See James A. O'donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation*, 3.
14. *Ibid.*, 3-4.
15. *Ibid.*, 4-6.
16. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
17. *History of the Church*, vol. II, 275.
18. O'donohoe, *Tridentine Seminary Legislation*, 9.
19. *History of the Church*, vol. IV, 575.
20. O'donohoe, 23.
21. *Ibid.*, 63.
22. Kenan Osborne, 277-78.
23. A. M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1984, 185; for this section see also Mathias Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, 1970; Thomas Puthiakunnel, *Syro-Malabar Clergy and their General Obligations*, Vincentian Publishing Bureau, Ernakulam, 1964; Scaria Zacharia, ed., *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Edamattam, 1994; Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Darton Longman & Todd, London, St. Paul Publications Bombay, 1970 etc.
24. According to Podipara, priests had a special dress of their own consisting in long, loose trousers and a long loose gown with wide sleeves and sailor's collar - all white. See Placid J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Darton Longman & Todd, London, St. Paul Publications Bombay, 1970, 89.
25. Mundadan, *History of Christianity*, vol. I, 186.
26. *Ibid.*, 185-192.
27. Engelbert Zeitler, *Die Genesis der heutigen lateinischen Priesterbildung in Indien*, (place, publisher and year are not given), 2-10.
28. See Xavier Koodapuzha, *Bharathasabhacharitram*, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Kottayam, 1988, 589-601.
29. The sources for this are Carlos Merces de Melo, *The Recruitment and Formation of the Native Clergy in India (16th-19th Century)*, Agencia Geral do Ultramar, Divisio de Publicacoes e Bibliotheca, Lisbon, 1955 and Engelbert Zeitler, *Die Genesis der heutigen Priesterbildung in Indien*.

30. It is estimated that some 50,000 priests left active ministry with or without dispensation between 1964 and 1986. See Adrian Hastings, ed., *Modern Catholicism*, SPCK, London, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991, 246.
31. *History of the Church*, vol. X, 346.
32. *Ibid.*, 348.
33. *AAS*, 62 (1970), 321-84.
34. The final document of the Synod "Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*" in *Origins* 21 (1991-92), 717-759.
35. See S. Arulsamy and S. Singaroyan, *Guide to the CBCI - CCBI Documents*, Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), New Delhi, 2000, 225-235.
36. *All India Seminar: Church in India Today*, C.B.C.I. Centre, New Delhi, 1969, 316.
37. D.S. Amalorpavadass, ed., *The Indian Church in the Struggle for a New Society*, NBCLC, Bangalore, 1981, 964-66.
38. See p. 21 of the *Charter of Priestly Formation for India*, 1988.
39. Kuncheria Pathil, "Rethinking Theological Education in India: New Models and Alternatives. A Discussion with Sebastian Kappen", *Jeevadhara*, 14 (July 1984), 285.
40. Paul Parathazham, "Catholic Priests in India: Reflections on a Survey", *Vidyajyoti*, 52 (August 1988), 385.
41. Mathew Vallipalam, *Priestly Formation in the Changing Society of India*, St. Paul Publications, Bombay, 1989, 302.
42. M. Amaladoss, "Towards an Indian Theology: Some Methodological Observations", in Amaladoss et al., *Theologizing in India*, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1981, 48.
43. Paul Parathazham, "Catholic Priests in India . . .", 384.
44. Mathew Vallipalam, *Priestly Formation in the Changing Society in India*, 302.
45. Malcolm S. Knowles, "Adult Learning Processes: Pedagogy and Andragogy", *Religious Education*, LXXII (March-April 1977), 211.
46. John P. Wagenhofer, "Spiritual Leadership: A Matrix for Ministerial Education", in Robert J. Wicks, ed., *Handbook of Spirituality for Ministers*, Paulist Press, New York, 1995, 539-40.
47. Ibid., 531-44. The following ideas are adapted from this article which is worth considering by educators in seminaries.
48. *Ibid.*, 531.
49. *Ibid.*, 532.
50. *Ibid.*, 536.
51. *Ibid.*, 537.

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Recruitment and Training of Religious Leaders in Hinduism

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Frankly, this title took me by surprise. How, I wondered, should I tackle the topic, for I have never heard of recruiting in any of the Hindu Ashrams. Though I have lived mostly in Rishikesh since 1974 I have neither discovered, nor experienced, any particular, explicit "preparation" method for the training of leaders. In these Hindu Ashrams there is nothing similar to the methods the Buddhists have where the aspirant is expected to stand outside knocking for admission for three days and where it is well known that the written petition for entry, slipped under the door, will be rejected for the first two days! In my experience I must say that I have been struck by the absence of any sense of "recruitment". Gurus sometimes may even persuade a candidate to postpone entry – perhaps in order to test them.

With a view to writing this paper I have held discussions with two venerable and experienced Gurus in a large and flourishing Hindu Ashram, and have had confirmation of the above when they were unable to formulate any precise answer to my question. They spoke of nothing other than the normal training that they give to aspirants. This is a brief outline of the daily schedule all the aspirants undergo in one ashram. It includes early rising, meditation, "*Pravachans*", or spiritual talks, group meetings, different appointed works, *Bhajans* and *Kirtan*, that is, singing God's glory, or *Nama Japa*, that is repetition of God's Name. There will, in addition, be guided spiritual reading. The aspirants attend the innumerable Hindu festivals and take their full share of their preparation as well, of course, as of the daily *Satsanga*. *Silence* at certain times is an important requirement. Unnecessary, or worldly, chattering is discouraged.

Above all, the disciple is formed through his or her personal relationship with the chosen Guru, though actually as Jesus Himself said: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (Jn 15: 16). Traditionally, it is believed that when the disciple is ready, the Guru appears and is recognized. Maybe this is the keynote of all the training that is given – it is a matter of awaiting the movement of the Spirit rather than bowing to a set of timing, or any arbitrary programme, which may in no way suit the spiritual progress of the candidate. Could I formulate this as saying that training is essentially personal, individual, in touch with the inner movement and breath of the Spirit. There is

no set number of months, no special span of years in which the aspirant becomes a *Brahmachari*, or later, a *Sannyasi*, as compared with the regulated periods we follow in accord with Canon Law. This freedom of/for the Spirit is very wise and attractive, I think.

For any serious seeker in the Hindu tradition the Guru is a "must"

These spiritual masters, unlike our leaders in the Christian/Catholic tradition, cannot be appointed by some higher religious authority, as, in our case, with a General appointing a Provincial, and a Provincial appointing a Superior. Such appointments, we know, last usually for a limited time and the mandate passes then to another appointed person. It is quite otherwise in the Hindu vision. In the Asian way of formation the Guru appears and is recognized by the disciple who is drawn to him/her by spiritual qualities and powers, which resonate with the aspirant's own spiritual trait. The bond once forged is for life. Such spiritual masters have the remembrance of their own discipleship, and are themselves still disciples at heart, in no way seeking advancement or power, but ready to be used at God's will.

Father Neuner writes in his Introduction to Franz Jalic's book *Called to Share in His Life* that in the Catholic tradition the priest is seen "as the leader of the community, but not as a Guru in the life of the Spirit".[1] We all know that a community "leader" may be involved in much administration, fund raising and in many social activities. We can guess, too, that he would surely envy the Hindu spiritual leader, who is assisted in activities, if there are such, by the "*seva*" (the voluntary service) of trusted and capable disciples. The Guru will apportion this "*seva*" to each disciple, and it is often a rigorous practical training, as also the number of hours of meditation per day, and the number of *malas* (beads) to be said, and he will follow this up personally. However, for the sake of good administration there will be one over-all administrator appointed.

In *Guru-Shishya* relationships, the secret, personal and normal method of training is for the purpose of becoming, not a *leader* but a *lover* of God. In Hinduism the aim is not how to govern and rule efficiently, how to train or teach, how to convert, but essentially, how to attain God. I quote from *Hinduism Today* December 1999 where Swami Krishnanda gives a full interview. He says: "Our aim is that we should realize God in this very birth. Our interest is in the soul, *atman*. Its liberation is the foremost point." Nothing else really matters during the formation years. The methods are flexible, various, long term and personally "tailored". Some laymen/laywomen may get into the yellow of the *brahmacharya* robe very soon after admission as a permanent member of the *ashram*. Others may remain in white for years as *sadhakas* and *sevaks*, or even in secular clothes as *ashramvasis*, right until they pass to the Further Shore.

Whatever their status or dress, all members of the Ashram have this one goal: *to attain God-Realization*. Over the years every single time I have heard the Head of the Ashram, Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, open a talk to any audience from whatever country, he