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# ***jnana**deepa*

**Pune Journal of Religious Studies**

**Formation  
Of Religious Leaders**



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## ***Jnanadeepa*: Pune Journal of Religious Studies**

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## Editorial

It is undeniable that religions exert a lot of influence on the life of people today. Whether they will continue to influence people in future depends to a large extent on the kind of leaders they are able to train. Hence, the selection and formation of religious leaders should be a matter of concern for all religions.

This is particularly true of the Church. For centuries the Church has invested a lot of resources, both personal and material, on the training of priests and religious. To what extent have her efforts been successful? It is difficult to say. What is, however, quite clear today is that there is a growing dissatisfaction with the way candidates for priesthood and religious life are recruited and formed. Hence, there is need for a rethinking of our recruitment and formation policy. The Church has to make sure that the right kind of young people are selected and that an adequate and meaningful formation is imparted to them.

It is against this background that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* has chosen to discuss the formation of future priests and religious.

The issue opens with two articles by two social scientists. The first one deals with the vocation and formation of clergy and religious from a social science perspective. It is based on an empirical study conducted by some students of Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth under the guidance of two social scientists. This study has collected a large amount of data on the family background of candidates to priesthood and religious life, the history of their vocation, their goals in life and motivations for joining, the effectiveness of formation and the competence of the formators. The article analyses and critically reflects on this data. It sheds light on the problems we face in the recruitment and formation of Christian leaders.

Equally informative is the second article which deals with the formation imparted to future priests in our seminaries. Basing himself on three scientific studies on different aspects of priestly formation, the author examines the kind of culture that presently exists in seminaries and the kind of priests it is likely to nurture. He finds that the culture that is now prevalent in the seminaries is deficient in pastoral dimension; that it emphasizes a theoretical rather than a practical orientation; that it lacks the horizontal dimension of spirituality; and that it exhibits some elements of rule consciousness, conformity and fear. Hence, the author makes a plea for the creation of a culture and structures that are more conducive to the formation of the kind of priests the Church and the people of India need today.

As Sacred Scripture and the Church's tradition offer important insights for the renewal of the formation of priests and religious, there are two articles in this issue which deal with them. The first one develops the New Testament Perspectives on the formation of Christian leaders. It focuses on the values and priorities in Jesus' life, the formation he imparted to the apostles, and the main

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main qualities he expected them to have. By way of conclusion the author points out the significance of all this for the formation of Christian leaders in India today. The second deals with the historical development of priestly formation in the Church. He discusses the pre-Tridentine practice, the establishment of seminaries by a decree of Trent and the advantages and disadvantages of the seminary system of priestly formation. He also highlights the new understanding of priestly ministry and the new orientation in priestly formation which were brought about by Vatican II and post-Conciliar developments. He concludes by making some constructive suggestions for the improvement of priestly formation in our day.

It is clear that the Church can learn a lot from the way different religions recruit and form their leaders. Hence, the plan was to include in this issue three articles, dealing with the selection and training of religious leaders in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Unfortunately, because of developments beyond our control, two of these had to be dropped. Hence, only one article is included here. It deals with the recruitment and training of religious leaders in Hinduism. The author stresses the importance of the Guru in the training of religious leaders in Hinduism. She also points out that the goal of this training is God-realization.

There are three articles which are future-oriented and suggest ways and means of improving the quality of formation imparted to candidates for priesthood and religious life. The first one which deals with the formation of women religious in the 21<sup>st</sup> century advocates a contextualised formation in and for mission. It also stresses the need for retrieving the strength and beauty of Indian women religious. The second article discusses the training of priests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. After a critical review of priestly formation in pre-Vatican II times, the author puts forward some concrete suggestions for a contextualized and more relevant training of future priests. The third article looks at formation from intercultural perspectives. It makes a clear distinction between formation, which has to do with vision, and training, which is concerned about strategies. While formation demands creativity, training imitates procedures and copies methods. The author insists on the need to adopt an intercultural approach to formation so that priests and religious are enabled to respond interculturally to the challenges of our time.

There is a special feature in this issue – an article by Raimon Panikkar: *The Encounter of Religions: The Unavoidable Dialogue*. This is a short summary of the author's ideas or rather his life experience. It begins by pointing out that interreligious dialogue is a vital necessity today. For our current problems of justice, ecology and peace-keeping require a mutual understanding of the peoples of the world that is impossible without dialogue. He goes on to describe the kind of dialogue we require today – open, interior, political, mythical, holistic, etc.

It is our hope that a radical reorientation of the formation of priests and religious will enable the Church to creatively respond to the manifold challenges of the new century.

Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ  
Editor