

Formators, Pastors, Other Agents of Formation and the Seminarians of the 21st Century

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Abstract.

Seminary formation is intrinsically aimed at being holistic because of its import. Beginning from the early centuries, the personnel configuration from this special institution has always received quality attention since its end product is often time expected to stand the taste of every ecclesiastical generation. The Papal documents such as *Pastores Dabo Vobis* of John Paul II in 1992, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* of Pope Paul VI in 1965, and *Optatam totius* of Pope Paul VI in 1965 are exceptional on the formation of Catholic Priests and Religious. The *Ratio Fundamentalis institutionis Sacerdotalis* is also critical on the same subject matter. This article argues that every validly ordained priest of the post Vatican II dispensation has elements of a training that emits from the four cardinal pillars of formation. These carefully chosen pillars are deliberately tailored to classically direct the formation of future priests and Religious. They are the nucleus from and through which formation in seminaries and houses of formation take guidance. It should be kept in perspective that while the word 'Pastor' is used here to designate the priest to whom a Seminarian is sent as an apprentice, the word 'Formator' is used to mean the Priest saddled with the responsibility of training Seminarians in the Seminary.

Keywords: Century, Formation, Historical, Pastor, Seminary.

Introduction

The formation to the Catholic priesthood has become more complex in modern times owing to the various experiences that the present civilisation has presented to us. There are so many technological advancement and discoveries that have so influenced man to making him a stranger to himself. The Society of Research (1993) in making a distinction between the centuries before and the twenty-first century development due to the growth of science and technology affirms thusly:

By the beginning of the (twenty-first) century, the notion of progress was closely linked with technological development, and that linkage intensified in the following decades. The automobile and the airplane

changed not only travel but the nature of our cities and towns. Radio and then television brought more of the outside world into everyone's home. Knowledge about the causes of diseases brought new treatments and preventive measures. Computer appeared, and soon the transistor made them smaller, more powerful, more accessible, and cheaper... organized research and development., which are increasingly international in character, have greatly increased the production of new knowledge. Deeper understanding of living organisms is leading toward cures of diseases once thought (9).

This global and cosmic progress is also found in the formation of candidates who are trained to be Catholic Priests and Religious. The formator who is given the responsibility of preparing the seminarian, the pastor who directs and supervises the seminarian on Apostolic Work or Pastoral Year cannot but be acquiesce to these changes in order to offer an up to date formation in the 21st century.

It must be noted with positive nostalgia that the historical setting and context of seminary formation in recent times has some substantial differences not without obvious resemblance between the themes developed in *Optatam Totius* (1965) and those of the Council of Trent (1545). Examining the years following the Council of Trent, one notices that there has been an objective shift towards a more holistic training of priests in the Church. Among the emphases that have shifted are the lessening of service-oriented pastoral formation and the centrality of the historical critical method of exegesis for Sacred Scripture, and a re-introduction of the centrality of Thomas Aquinas (Fairbanks 2017, 102-104).

It is, therefore, not only in the setting and context of seminary formation that change has taken place; there are also analogous changes in the leadership of the seminaries in modern times. In recent times, we have noticed an increase of the number of Seminary Formators and more staff to boost the formation process. There is more emphasis on the Four Pillars of formation namely: The Intellectual, Spiritual, Human and Pastoral.

And in observing these formation pillars, we cannot but underscore and take note of the rapid growth and influence of the secular culture which has inadvertently influenced Seminary formation in different ways. In this article, we shall examine who a Pastor is, who a Formator is, Seminary Formation and the Pillars of Formation. We shall attempt to discuss what the role of a Pastor and a Formator should be in training a Seminarian, Priests and other agents of formation, the experience of the Seminarian of the 21st century and conclude. Let us now examine some of the terms used in the context of this work.

Pastor, Formator and Seminary Formation

The Pastor

The word "Pastor" derives from the Latin noun *pastor* which means "shepherd" and is derived from the verb *pascere* - "to lead to pasture, set to grazing, cause to eat" (n.d.). Present-day usage of the word is rooted in the Biblical metaphor of shepherding. The Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) uses the Hebrew word רעה (*ro'eh*), which is used as a noun as in "shepherd", and as a verb as in "to tend a flock. It occurs 173 times in 144 Old Testament verses and relates to the literal feeding of sheep, as in Genesis 29:7. In Jeremiah 23:4, both meanings are used (*ro'im* is used for "shepherds" and *yir'um* for "shall feed them"), "And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the LORD." A Pastor (n.d.) is the leader of a Christian congregation who also gives advice and counsel to people from the community or congregation.

The word Pastor as used in the Code of Canon Law is *parochus*. The parish priest is the proper clergyman in charge of the congregation of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ's faithful, in accordance with the law (Canon 519).

The Formator

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary describes a Formator as a moulder or modeller (n.d.). The word Formator is better described than defined. He is the one who forms other people to achieve a certain goal or attain a certain position. The Formator could be one who is capable of giving academic or spiritual, human, psychological and/or other forms of training to someone or people with the intention of attending or achieving a certain goal or position.

A Formator in ecclesiastical circles could be someone, mostly a priest or religious, who helps in the training or moulding of seminarians or the religious towards becoming priests or religious. Or someone formed to be in charge of accompanying young people who are aspiring to respond to some distinctive calls from God to accomplish a future task.

Seminary Formation

Formation is derived from the Latin word, *formo-formare*, which means "form, shape, fashion, model" (n.d.). Formation, from the Latin noun formation, means "something possessing structure or form"; "the act of assembling a

group or structure.” (n.d.). “an act of giving form or shape to something or of taking form: development.”

The Seminary is the place or environment where young people receive spiritual, intellectual, psychological and human training towards becoming priests or religious. This is where men who have received some high level of formation are assembled for the purpose of imparting knowledge and exposing the candidates towards attaining a certain level of formation in order for them to become trained spiritual leaders.

According to Daboh (2020), the beginning of seminary formation can be traced back to when Jesus, chose his Apostles from among his disciples in order to prepare them to assist him in his public ministry (137). The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work, which the evangelist Mark illustrates in these words: "And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk. 3:13-15) (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*: n. 1).

Seminary formation is assembling young men and giving them instructions on how to carry out certain functions and to spread some form of information in order to achieve a set goal. Daboh went further to say “The Apostles received three years of informal formation from Jesus before he was taken up to heaven. These three years could be likened to their seminary formation period. Then, at the last Supper, when their seminary formation had supposedly been completed, Jesus conferred the priesthood on them. But after his resurrection, He commissioned these priests of His to go out into the whole world and preach the Good News” (2020, 138).

The Seminary ground or the institution is principally set aside to be a place where the students are given integral formation. The seminary, therefore, “does not intend to form only intellectuals [intellectualism], despite taking the intellectual preparation of the Seminarians very seriously. It also does not intend to achieve a monastic type of formation (spiritualism), although it certainly grants a central place to prayer and the sacramental life. It does not intend to form good organizers (“pastoralists”), even if it is concerned with offering Seminarians the best preparation for pastoral activities. Lastly, it is not concerned with forming only ministers of cult (“liturgism”), it offers Seminarians the best possible liturgical formation.” (n.d.). The Seminary essentially aims at a holistic training towards the evangelisation of the people.

Furthermore, the target for the formation and the first formator is the Seminarian himself. According to the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* “each Seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation, as has already been

mentioned, and is called to a journey of ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas, taking into account his own personal and family background. Seminarians are likewise responsible for establishing and maintaining a climate of formation that is consistent with the values of the Gospel (RFIS, 130).

In the same light, the Seminarians come from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They are, however, trained to have a certain line of thought that embraces all forms of cultures. It takes into cognizance also those who came from secular schools and the Minor Seminaries; and this is acknowledged in order to enable them function at the same level. There are some of the Seminarians that at the point of entry into the Major Seminary are already well advanced in social communication, technological awareness and even exposed to sociological expedients. The formation must note these so as to integrate those who may have not had the opportunity to some exposures.

It is in reference to this desire that in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Pope John Paul II describes the cardinal foundations for priestly formation as human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. These cardinal foundations, while each of them is distinct in itself, are unsurprisingly linked to each other. They form the comprehensive structure of formation that guides Formators in the process leading to the Catholic Priesthood (Congregation for the Clergy, 2016). We shall now examine each of the cardinal pillars to see how they unilaterally harness the process of Seminary formation.

Cardinal Areas of Seminarians' Formation

Spiritual Formation

In Seminary formation, the Seminarian it is intended to be formed in such a way that he grows substantially in his relationship with Christ through a life of prayer and meditation. The spiritual formation helps the Seminarian to experience an overwhelming relationship with God and to share this love with the people he encounters. In spiritual formation, he learns and imbibes spiritual exercises to prepare him towards a pious life.

This pious life is a deep response to the call to holiness. This demand for personal holiness and other spiritual requirements in the life of priests is obvious. The call to priestly holiness implies the need to constantly look into ourselves so as to be able to discover, the abiding presence of God (Oredikpe, 2018, 25).

Spiritual exercises are an ideal opportunity to enjoy more time for prayer where one can constantly renew his relationship with the people. The essential content

of spiritual formation specifically leading toward the priesthood is well expressed in the Council's decree *Optatam Totius* thus:

Spiritual formation...should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Those who are to take on the likeness of Christ the priest by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives. They should live his paschal mystery in such a way that they will know how to initiate into it the people committed to their charge. They should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the word of God and in active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the Divine Office, to seek him in the bishop by whom they are sent and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, little children, the weak, sinners and unbelievers. With the confidence of sons, they should love and reverence the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as a mother to the disciple by Jesus Christ as he was dying on the cross. (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*: n. 45).

Intellectual Formation

In the area of intellectual formation, the Seminarian is trained to seek to grow deeper his faith through an in-depth study of philosophy and theology so that he understands how he can genuinely assert the Biblical and relevant teachings that relate to their formation to the Catholic priesthood. "If we expect every Christian," the synod fathers write, "to be prepared to make a defence of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt. 3:15), then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity. For the salvation of their brothers and sisters they should seek an ever-deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 51).

The obligation to study, which is an integral part of the Seminary formation, is not taken for granted because it helps the Seminarians to be exposed to all human dimensions of growth. Through learning or study of philosophy and theology, the Seminarian understands the word of God which enables him to prepare himself for the great task ahead.

Pastoral Formation

This is the field of practical formation, ecclesial participation and communication of their own faith. The Seminarian is assigned to undergo some sort of practical exercises with regards to the things that pertain his formation to the priesthood. The Seminarian, having finished the study of Philosophy, is

place under the charge of a priest to learn how to carry out pastoral work. In fact, this period of learning is called Pastoral Year (P.Y). After this year, the Seminarian is again sent to a parish or institution each long vacation for Apostolic Work (A.W) for a period of two or so months.

These experiences can be of a social nature (in order to face reality), community based (in order to affirm the ecclesial membership), or catechetical in nature (in order to open a space for them to share their faith). Close accompaniment during pastoral placements is paramount and involves the lay faithful. According to *Pastores Dabo Vobis*:

“... Pastoral formation certainly cannot be reduced to a mere apprenticeship, aiming to make the candidate familiar with some pastoral techniques. The seminary which educates must seek really and truly to initiate the candidate into the sensitivity of being a shepherd, in the conscious and mature assumption of his responsibilities, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and establishing priorities and looking for solutions on the basis of honest motivations of faith and according to the theological demands inherent in pastoral work.” (n. 57-58)

Human Formation

The ministry of the priest is, certainly, to proclaim the word, to celebrate the sacraments, and to guide the Christian community in charity "in the name and in the person of Christ," but all this he does dealing always and only with individual human beings as Hebrews 5:1 says: "Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God". The Seminarian is formed in such a way that he becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the Redeemer of humanity. His formation should be humanly credible since he will eventually work with people from different cultural backgrounds.

The Seminarian is trained to cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to minister to the people. This makes the him to have equilibrium capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities. He is formed to love and defend the truth, to be loyal to authority, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgment and behaviour."(*Pastores Dabo Vobis*: n. 43)

The Human Formation helps the Seminarian to become a man of integrity with the personality necessary for priestly ministry in the Church. It "seeks to

prepare men to be bridges for, not obstacles to, the spread of the Gospel” (Program of Priestly Formation, 83). The community life of the Seminary and the various services and co-curricular programs of the Human Formation Program are ordered to assist the Seminarian to grow in true freedom, to develop a solid moral character, to be well-oriented to the truth, to become a man of communion, to evidence affective maturity, to be respectful of every person, to exercise appropriate care for his physical well-being, to be a good steward with respect to temporal goods, and to be a confident leader.

The *Ratio Fundamentalis* supports this by stating that:

Human formation, being the foundation of all priestly formation, promotes the integral growth of the person and allows the integration of all its dimensions. Physically, this means an interest in health, nutrition, physical activity, and rest; psychologically it focuses on the constitution of a stable personality, characterised by emotional balance, self-control and a well-integrated sexuality. In the moral sphere, it is connected to the requirement that the individual arrive gradually at a well-formed conscience. This means that he will become a responsible person able to make the right decisions, gifted with right judgement and able to have an objective perception of persons and events. Such a perspective should bring the seminarian to a balanced sense of self respect, leading him to be aware of his own talents and learning how to place them at the service of the People of God. The aesthetic sense should also be cultivated in human formation, by offering opportunities for an appreciation of various modes of artistic expression, cultivating in him the 'sense of beauty'. He ought to be aware of the social environment, and be helped to improve his capacity for social interaction, so that he can contribute to building up the community in which he lives (RFIS, 94).

Having seen the four pillars of formation and their relevance in the training of future priests, we now take a look at the role of Formators in the seminary and how they influence and inspire the candidates to the Catholic priesthood.

The Formator and Seminary Formation

Given the quality of attention place on the formation of candidates to the Catholic priesthood, the Decree on Priestly training state:

Since the training of students depends both on wise laws and, most of all, on qualified educators, the administrators and teachers of seminaries are to be selected from the best men, and are to be carefully prepared in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience and special

spiritual and pedagogical training. Institutes, therefore, should be set up to attain this end. Or at least courses are to be arranged with a proper program, and the meetings of seminary directors are to take place at specified times (*Optatam Totius*: n. 5)

The Church must therefore place premium importance on those who form candidates to the priesthood and religious life because they are participating in the core mission of the Church. The formation of the Formators is therefore part of the essential mandate of Christ to the Church. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV) describes the work of the Formators as follows: The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work, which the evangelist Mark illustrates in these words: "And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk. 3:13-15) (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no.2). This demonstrates the beginning of the art of preparing and sending out those who have been moulded and given the aptitude to preach to the people. In this case Jesus himself is the first Formator.

As a Formator, therefore, it is imperative to note from the beginning that in formation to Priesthood and the Religious life, the Formator is not the principal agent of formation; it is the Holy Spirit. After that, the candidate becomes the principal subject who responds to the invitations and movements of the Holy Spirit. The Formator is a collaborator with both the Holy Spirit and the candidate who desires to be a Catholic priest or a religious.

In the same understanding, the Formator in the Seminary is taken to be one of the best priests by way of his life of witness and his intellectual capabilities and dispositions. He is meant to understand that "unless the Lord builds the house, in vain is his labor." The Formator cannot depend on his knowledge and dedication but must know the importance and urgency of bringing and showing the candidates before and to God in prayer. The Formator must be one who is disposed to dispense his knowledge and way of life for the Seminarians to emulate. He must be one who is prayerful and readily available for the Seminarians. He must be a gentle man who understands the dynamics of the youth, one who has a good knowledge of and in constant touch with the socio economic and political situation of his environment. A Formator must be one who has a reasonable knowledge of formation itself. Since one cannot give what he doesn't have; he must have a substantial disposition towards the operational ways of the 21st century youth.

The Formator is a cooperative mediator in the process of moving the candidate from where he is coming from to inside the life of the Seminary, his new home. The Formator should therefore cultivate generously the dexterity to attract and

hearten the young person to willingly and joyfully release his heart and to share his feelings, his thoughts, hopes, doubts, and struggles in order to experience a new disposition and be ready to change for the better. This openness and ability to share his life is paramount to proper formation. Having this kind of outlook, the young person can become more open and receptive to the promptings of the Spirit in his life. He will learn to discern between those promptings and desires that are from the Holy Spirit, and those that come from himself and especially from his unvarying fears and concerns.

Furthermore, the mission of a Formator is to assist the Seminarians to recognize their enthusiasm to be trained as Diocesan or Religious priests. Candidates who articulate their desire to be priests come from different cultural backgrounds and have diverse experiences. While some of them are from organised homes; some are from broken homes; and while some of them are from crises ridden ethnic backgrounds, some are from peaceful environments; while some are from rural areas, some are from urban areas, and they all have different psychological dispositions and experiences that the Formator should understand and seek ways of managing them aptly. Some of them carry with them psychological wounds from the past and have not yet been properly healed. These wounds can disturb the process of growth to be a mature person (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2008, n.d.).

According to Rulla et al (1986), '60%-80% of the persons who choose a vocation have a genuine motivation which coexists with another motivation, the latter being in part a desire of the merely apparent good' (374). The Formator must therefore decipher the disparity between a casual desire and a proper motivation to the Catholic priesthood. Seminarians with mixed motivation end up working towards pleasing and impressing the authorities that matter in order to have their way to the Catholic priesthood and the Religious life. This is supported by Malaviaratchi when he said that 'those seeking religious formation from mixed motives know how to play the game, what to say and do and whom they need to impress, bishops, provincials, councilors, formators, and so forth' (Malaviaratchi, 2006, 24).

In a similar vein, a Formator without special training to know and understand the motivational means to the Priesthood and the Religious life can do a lot of damage to the candidates entrusted to his care. Speaking of the import of Formator's guidance to work in formation, Rulla et al (1986) write:

But it is not an easy task which one can approach without proper training, nor just by reading a few books. Such training should include the acquisition of a vision of the basic anthropological realities of the person who is called to respond to the Christian vocation, a vision as

clear and comprehensive as possible. But that by itself is not enough; the training should be accompanied by a sufficient personal experience of the process of internalization and of the difficulties and limitations which are encountered in this journey, especially of those linked to the area of the unconscious and of effective freedom. Such personal experience should begin with oneself, and then be extended to acquiring the capacity of helping others, a capacity which can only be acquired through a suitable process of supervised learning guided by experts. After all, such formation is not something extraordinary; it meets the demands of a realistic anthropology. Further, if several years can be spent in preparing professors and administrators, there is no reason why such time cannot be given to preparing people to form others in the Christian vocation. Jesus Christ, with his apostles, did not just provide a program of catechesis, but also a personal pedagogy (400).

On a related occasion, Pope Francis, in addressing the Congregation for the Clergy, spoke of discernment as follows:

We need priests; there is a lack of vocations. The Lord calls, but it is not enough. And we bishops are tempted to take the young men who present themselves without discernment. This is bad for the Church! Please, one must carefully study the evolution of a vocation! See whether it comes from the Lord, whether the man is healthy, whether the man is well-balanced, whether the man is capable of giving life, of evangelizing, whether the man is capable of forming a family and renouncing this in order to follow Jesus. Today we have so many problems, and in many dioceses, because some bishops made the mistake of taking those who at times have been expelled from other seminaries or religious houses because they need priests. Please! We must consider the good of the People of God" (Francis, Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy, 3 October 2014).

Moreover, Saint John Paul II states that "the bishops first of all should feel their grave responsibility for the formation of those who have been given the task of educating future priests" (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 66). The Congregation for Catholic Education insists that: "Formators need to be adequately prepared to carry out a discernment that, fully respecting the Church's doctrine on the priestly vocation, allows for a reasonably sure decision as to whether the candidate should be admitted to the seminary or house of formation of the religious clergy, or whether he should be dismissed from the seminary or house of formation for reasons of unsuitability" (Guidelines for the use of psychology in the admission and formation of candidates for the priesthood, 2008, n.3).

This means that it is not everybody that could be saddled with the responsibility of discerning the dispositions of those who have submitted themselves to be trained as Catholic priests or Religious. The Formator should receive substantial formation that prepares him for the assignment of forming others.

In addition, the Formator's love for the Church should have a very lofty zeal and intensity in order to be able to share it also with the students. Being a representative of the Church the Formator presents himself to the candidate as a father and a friend. He is father because of his prestige, experience and care for the integral formation of the young men; he gives advice, demands and forgives. He is a friend because of his intimacy, benevolence and constant availability. In the role of friend, he accompanies the student, works together with him and helps him in the process of self-formation (Stanislaw, 2005).

If the Formator is to be a father and a friend to the Seminarian, he should also possess human, spiritual, pastoral and professional abilities and resources, so as to provide a right accompaniment that is balanced and respectful of the freedom and the conscience of the other person, and that will help him in his human and spiritual growth" (*Ration Fundamentalis Internationalis Sacerdotale*: n. 49).

In order to have a balanced and respectful disposition for the Seminarian, the Formator should not be afraid to take a decision, no matter how tough it may be, and given the use and demand of right conscience, provided it is for the good of the Church and the Seminarian. It is poignant that at times, we find some Formators, when it comes to taking crucial decisions that may not be acceptable to the majority, will prefer to look the other direction knowing full well that their decision may not be right with reference to the *modus operandi* of the Church. A Formator that is worth his salt will prefer to be alone and take the narrow gate, even when he knows his decision will be unpopular.

We have now seen the role and significance of the Formator in training candidates to the priesthood and the Religious life. The Seminarian under training goes home on holidays, and goes to people outside the Seminary or formation house for Apostolic Work; we shall now examine the role of the people he meets and the priest that observes, instructs and supervises his affairs while outside the formation ground.

Pastors (parish priests) and other Agents of Formation

Since it is important that a Formator must be carefully chosen, it is also necessary that the parish priest/pastor who is given a Seminarian to work with should also be one who can carefully and sincerely observe, assist and evaluate the Seminarian. In this case, the priest must not have the formal

formation like those who are trained to be in the Seminary for formation. It is simply enough that the priest is a model. One who knows the mind of the Church with regards to the priestly formation, one who is conversant with the import of helping Seminarians to be well trained for the sake of the Church. He should be one who is able to honestly appraise the Seminarian and make suitable suggestions and corrections to the Seminarian and send same report to the Seminary for further assistance and formation of the said Seminarian.

The pastor should ensure that the verbal advice he gives the Seminarian at the end of his Apostolic Work or Pastoral Year tallies with the written report he sends to the Seminary and the office of the Vocations Director. Therefore, the parish priest should not permit the Seminarian to write his own report because he wants to avoid being accused of his withdrawal from Formation, where that is necessary. Whatever is the content and nature of his verbal judgment of the Seminarian at the end of his Apostolic Work or Pastoral Year, should exactly be what is in the written report he sends to the Seminary and the Vocations' Director's office. Pastors who act contrarily to the preceding exhortations should be helped to know the veracity of their incongruous behaviour.

Parents, relations and friends of Seminarians have relevant roles to exhibit in the formation of our future priests. It is clear that basic education comes from the family. Character formation and broad launching into life in society are all received in the family and especially from the parents, friends and relations. When Bishop Giuseppe Sarto (Pope Pius X) showed his new bishop's ring to his mother to kiss, the latter admired his Episcopal ring but also showed her wedding ring to her son and asked him to also kiss it, "for without this you never would have received yours". By extension her wedding ring helped to fashion his Episcopal ring and to lay foundations for it. This simply demonstrates the place of the family in forming the future priest.

In modern times, we see some parents, relations and friends insisting their children must go into the priesthood and the Religious life. Going into the Seminary to be trained should not be by compulsion. It is incorrect for parents to pressurize their children to go into the Seminary to be trained as Catholic Priest or Religious. Parents have a right to properly desire and pray that one or more of their children be called by God to the sacred priesthood or the Religious life. This role or right should be according to the willingness of the individual to accept the call from God and nurture the desire of his parents.

It is inopportune that some parents and relations of some Seminarians tend to conceal, protect, defend and even issue threats should somebody report to the concerned authorities the bad behaviours or scandals committed by their children when they are home for holidays or other similar holidays. They do

this because of the off beam notion they have about the priesthood. For some of them, the Priesthood is not just a meal ticket, but a huge cachet to the family. The role of the parents, relations and friends is to hearten their children, should they express the desire for the priesthood or the Religious life. They should correct them when they see them behaving contrary to their supposed call and even, for the sake of good conscience, report to the relevant ecclesial authorities in order to correct them.

The Christian community also has a role to play in training the Seminarian. The Seminarian on Apostolic Work is expected to work with the different groups in the parish and environs. The members of the groups and sodalities in the parish should courageously assist and advice the Seminarian. They should speak out and correct him in love when the Seminarian acts and speaks in detrimental dispositions of formation to the Catholic Priesthood or the Religious life. In this way, the Church could be saved from the mistake of ordaining an unsuitable person to the priesthood or allowing such a person to make religious profession.

The Seminarian and the 21st Century's Trends

The 21st century has witnessed several depictions and definitions of life in many ways dissimilar from traditional and orthodoxy understandings. These are expressed in the forms of new doctrines, morality, ethics and values. We are experiencing new psychology, sociology and pedagogy and these are rooted in the new visions of secularity, an intricate ideology of human origin, subsistence and meaning, new crusades on freedom from religion, not freedom of religion (Kresta, 2013, 13). These have, in various ways, influenced the rudiments and fabrics of formation to the Catholic priesthood and the Religious life.

There is a cursory and sincere need for careful examination of the form of formation in our Seminaries today in order to meet up with the challenges of modern times. This, however, must not damage or contradict the essence of the Seminary formation itself. In relation to this, the introduction to the Decree on Priestly Training (*Optatam Totius*) postulates:

The holy council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole church depends to a great extent on a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ. It proclaims the supreme importance of priestly formation and affirms some of its primary principles whereby laws tested by the experience of centuries are confirmed and new elements are introduced to correspond with the constitutions and decrees of this council and with the changed conditions of our time.

On the need to be careful with the modern elements of societal development being experienced in our day, the aspect of science and technology should be taken into deep and serious consideration. Since this is the age in which Seminarians are formed, the Church, therefore, calls for apposite education of Seminary Formators and the faithful to know how to apply some of the inventions of science and technology. According to the document on social communication, *Aetatis Novae*, "Education and training regarding the internet ought to be part of comprehensive programs of media education available to members of the Church. As much as possible, pastoral planning for social communications should make provision for this training in the formation of Seminarians, Priests, Religious, and lay pastoral personnel as well as Teachers, Parents, and Students" (1992, n.28).

In his message for the World Communication Sunday of 2010, Pope Benedict XVI calls on the pastors of the Church to embrace the reality of the media in the proclamation of the Word of God. He also warns that they are to make responsible use of it. In other words, the use of the media for the proclamation of the word of God must make them efficient, compelling and focused. In his words: All priests have as their primary duty the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, and the communication of his saving grace in the sacraments ... the increased availability of the new technologies demand greater responsibility on the part of those called to proclaim the word, but it also requires them to become more focused, efficient and compelling in their efforts (16th May, 2010).

Given the words of Benedict XVI, it becomes relatable to underscore the need for the Church to continue to use this veritable means of evangelisation especially in houses of formation and Seminaries, not without adequate supervision by the Formator as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* asserts: The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims from the house tops the message of which she is the depository (1975, n.45). This is where the instruction from the *Code of Canon Law* becomes applicable: while pride of place must always be given to preaching and catechetical instruction, all the available means of proclaiming Christian doctrine are to be used: the exposition of doctrine in schools, in institutes of higher learning, at conference and meetings of all kinds; public declarations by lawful authority on the occasion of certain events; the printed word and other means of social communication (2010, n.761).

In the process of using this important means of communication in the Church and in Seminaries, care must be taken that the Seminarians who are encouraged to have a mastery of the means of communication and the social media, are

meticulously taught the extremes of the social media. It is important to note that “the world of the media can sometimes seem indifferent and even hostile to the Christian faith and morality. This is partly because media culture is so deeply imbued with a typically postmodern sense that the only absolute truth is that there are no absolute truths or that, if there were, they would be inaccessible to human reason and therefore irrelevant” (22nd, February, 2002).

Seminarians should be adequately informed on the dangers of the inappropriate and irresponsible use of their phones or communication gargets or the social media. This will help them to avoid using them during ecclesiastical celebrations except on request. Pope Francis once chastised priests and bishops who take pictures with their cell phones during mass, saying they should focus on God instead. He described the use of cell phone during mass as “very ugly thing; it makes me very sad when I celebrate mass here in the piazza or in the basilica and I see so many cell phones held up. Not only by the faithful, but also by some priests and even bishops. The mass is not a show. So, remember, no cell phones” (8th November, 2017).

There is also the problem of insatiability among some Seminarians under formation today: it is materialism. It means “a desire for wealth and material possessions with little interest in ethical or spiritual matters.” (n.d). This has so penetrated Church leaders and Seminarians to point that some of them no longer believe in a God who cares for His creations. And this misleading notion of God, as one who only creates and gives comfort, leads to a mad desire and “worship of health, wealth and happiness” (1988, 52) and unhealthy quest for unnecessary material things that could hamper their relationship with God as Goudzwaard (1984) rightly observes that:

We know from the scripture that both persons and societies can put their faith in things and forces which their own hands have made. In their pursuit of prosperity, salvation, health, protection and so forth, people sooner or later create gods. But gods never leave their makers alone. Because people put themselves in a position of dependence on their gods, invariably, the moments come when these things or forces gain the upper hand (13).

In the same vein, it is pertinent to note with emphasis that the incompatibility of materialism and godliness is an obvious demonstration that,

Anyone who makes the pursuit of material things the basis of spiritual life has moved away from sound Bible teaching. A primary search for selfish material prosperity cannot co-exist with the drive towards serving God. Making wealth the primary focus of our teaching is

fundamentally flawed and ultimately leads people away from God (Orgu 2017, n,p).

The modern Seminarian should be made to know and understand that no one can serve two masters and be maximally faithful to each of them. Man is made to control the quest of material things and not material things to control his quest for worldliness.

Furthermore, this quest for material things has made some Seminarians to confuse their principal desire of serving God and humanity. The whole struggle becomes thwarted in things that do not matter in the spiritual life of the Seminarian. One notices that some Seminarians are already thinking and planning for the kind of cars they would use as priests, the kind of dressing they will imbibe, the kind of android phones they will use and many other similar dreams.

It goes without saying that there are lots distracting the attention of Seminarians from the 'outside world'. This has in different ways influenced some of them in their style of dressing, speaking, preaching and even praying. Some of them who have been influenced or attracted by Pentecostal ways of preaching watch Pentecostal pastors (Akinwale 1999, n.d.) and even buy their video and audio tapes to learn how they preach and gesticulate.

It cannot be totally dismissed that some leaders of the Catholic Church (priests and Religious) have not really kept to one of their principal tasks of preaching the Gospel in the language and manner their people understand. The teaching of Catechism is left for the youths and some other members of the Church who have little or no idea about Catechesis. Some preach sermons instead of homilies, leaving the people spiritually malnourished. This is considered one of the things making some Seminarians and even some priests to take the pentecostal form and style of preaching.

Conclusion

It is evident that the priestly formation that was received in the early centuries of the Church's history is distinct from what is experienced in the 21st century, not without the profound and requisite elements of formation. The distinctive but linked pillars of formation as elaborated by the Church are still very much relevant today. Formators, Pastors and other pivotal agents of formation are expected to be proactive in order to meet up with contemporary technological advancements and exploits. This approach should be geared towards sustaining and improving the eroding standards of the formation of our priests.

Agents of formation should live a life of witness in order to be models to their Seminarians. They should struggle to live with serenity by practicing evangelical simplicity and poverty, while shunning a comfortable, consumerist and hedonistic lifestyle such as that which pervades society today. In this way, the seminarians will come to reflect the ideal of the priesthood. The Seminarian will have to cultivate a proper disposition and free himself from any distraction that could constitute an impediment to his love of Christ. Seminaries must promote within the Seminarians a sense of legitimate interior silence” (6th January,1980, 1. no.7). On this, the words of Pope Benedict XVI become relevant to everyone when he states:

Whoever wants to be a friend of Jesus and become his authentic disciple, be it seminarian, priest, religious or lay person, must cultivate an intimate friendship with him in meditation and prayer. The deepening of Christian truths and the study of theology . . . presupposes an education to silence and contemplation, because one must become capable of listening to God speaking in the heart. Thought must always be purified to be able to enter the dimension where God pronounces his creative and redemptive Word; his Word “comes out of silence,” to use the beautiful expression of St Ignatius of Antioch (Letter to the Magnesians, VIII, 2). Only if it is born from the silence of contemplation can our words have some value and usefulness, and not resemble the inflated discourses of the world that seek the consensus of public opinion (23rd, October, 2006).

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